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MARTIN MERRIVALE,

MARTIN MERRIVALE:

HIS X MARK.

BY

PAUL CREYTON.

John Townsend Trowbridge.

ILLUSTRATED.

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MARTIN MERRIVALE,

HIS X MARK.

I.

THE BEGGAR OF BAGDAD, AND OTHERS.

THE author of "The Beggar of Bagdad" chose the most appropriate season of the year for the composition of his great Romance. It was begun in the month of June, and completed in October. Thus the opening pages breathed all the warmth and freshness of early summer; the body of the work glowed with the sultry heat of August; and the concluding portions, taking their peculiar richness of coloring from the gorgeous tints of the autumnal woods, seemed like so many flaming leaves of oak and maple. Another circumstance may be considered favorable. The author was in the very fire and frenzy of poetic youth; the winter of calm judgment had not yet come to chill and drive away those bright-winged humming-birds of fancy, which delighted so to suck the flowers of romance in gardens of the East.

But, while the author's youth — he was in his twentieth year — and the influences of external nature were propitious, his private life at that time was strikingly in contrast with the scenes he described. Like many another wonderful hero of fiction, the Beggar of Bagdad was born in humble lodgings. Incredible as it may seem, all those rare fancies touching Alphiddi's palace originated in Mrs. Dabney's kitchen. Thus, also, the ineffably sweet perfumes which filled the enchanted chamber of the lovely Lillifoo may have been suggested by the smell of boiled cabbage. Perhaps the original of that fair creature's portrait was Mrs. Dabney herself. Lustrous orbs, dark as the wing of night, do not, indeed, much resemble sharp, little gray eyes, twinkling through brass-bowed spectacles; there is also some difference between raven tresses, several feet long, and thin, faded brown hair, supported by side-combs, under a dingy cap-border, and knotted up in a little ball behind; nor could the widow's old black gown compare with the heroine's magnificent apparel, more than her unhappy scowl could emulate the beauty of Lillifoo's exquisite face. Yet she sat for the portrait, which the young romancer executed with about as much fidelity to truth as some artists, not over conscientious, display in making pleasant likenesses of ugly customers for a consideration.

In like manner, the prototype of the brave Alphiddi, who assumed a mean disguise, in order to enter the gates of the ancient enemy of his house, Lillifoo's cruel sire, and touch her hand, when she bestowed alms upon the handsome young beggar, — with whom, by the way, she was destined to fall desperately in love, — must be looked for in the humble person of Cheseboro', commonly called Cheesy, only son of the late powerful Grand Vizier, — that is, of Mr. C. Dabney, senior, the widow's lamented

consort. Hence, probably, the interest that ragged young gentleman took in the fortunes of the noble Alphiddi. When portions of the manuscript were read to his step-mother, he never failed to listen. So strong even was his curiosity, that he was often caught looking over the author's shoulder, while he wrote. Although sometimes a little troublesome, he could not have better pleased his distinguished friend, who, like most authors, was sufficiently vain to feel highly gratified at the humblest recognition of his genius.

One afternoon, however, Martin appeared unusually nervous. He could no longer endure Cheesy at his elbow. Bending eagerly over the kitchen table, he wrote with something like the old energy he had brought to the task four months before, when his hot brain was full of beggars of Bagdad and ambition. The great Romance was drawing to its close; and the author, who saw the end of his labors with a feeling of ecstasy, was finishing with some grand tableaux of the most exciting description.

Cheesy manifested more than ordinary interest in that day's manuscripts. Whenever Mrs. Dabney's back was turned, he was sure to forsake the worn dasher of the little old yellow churn, which stood in the pantry-door, and, stepping forward on tiptoe, stretch his long neck and open his staring eyes over Martin's shoulder. At length, when the counterfeit beggar was shifting his disguise, and suddenly discovering himself to be the true Alphiddi, in presence of Lillifoo's astounded friends, Cheesy became deeply interested. Wider and wider expanded mouth and eyes, and while his neck manifested new powers of extension, he pressed nearer and nearer, until he might have been seen bearing down with his whole weight upon Martin. But the latter was a slender youth, and the incumbrance was too much for him.

"Hillo!" he cried, sharply, looking up. Cheesy drew back, and screened his face with his elbow, as if expecting a blow.

"Now, don't be mad, Mr. Mer'vale, — don't!" said he, in a voice which, being in a transition state between boyish treble and manly bass, was as ragged as his dress. "I won't do so agin, I promise ye; though I do want to know what they done with Alphiddi, the wust way."

"Cheesy," replied Martin, his face lighting up joyfully, "can you tell me what year it is?"

"Why, it 's the year of Anno Domini eighteen hundred and forty — something, an't it? Forty what? I 've forgot, that 's a fact."

Martin set the lad right on the subject of the forgotten number, and charged him to remember it. "Because," he added, with a sense of the humorous, "it is the year in which, as you can tell any one who asks you hereafter, the Romance of The Beggar of Bagdad was written. And you can say, too, that it was completed — now, see if you can tell me what day of the month it is."

Cheesy occupied some seconds in counting his fingers, while Martin waited for him with a patient smile.

"Fiftieth day, an't it?" he suddenly exclaimed, in his coarsest tones, brightening with intelligence. "Need n't laugh! I heard you say yourself, three weeks ago to-morrer, the day we sold our fat calf, 't was the thirtieth."

"But there are only thirty-one days in the longest month."

"So there an't!" said Cheesy, rubbing his knees and grinning, as he doubled himself up before his distinguished friend. "Tell me what day 't is, then. I 'll remember."

Martin gave him the exact date of that eventful day, to be treasured in his memory; and, requesting not to be troubled any more for the present, resumed his writing.

"But I want to know how it 's coming out. Did Alphiddi tell Lillifoo's father —"

Cheesy's question was cut short by a box on the ear, which sent him back to the churn with a suppressed howl of pain. He continued to mutter revengefully for some moments, but his complaint was drowned in the harsh tones of his step-mother's voice, as she scolded him for his laziness and disobedience. Meanwhile Martin proceeded to describe the exceeding softness of Lillifoo's shriek, as she sank fainting in the arms of her gallant Alphiddi.

"Come, Mr. Mer'vale," demanded Mrs. Dabney, turning upon the young author, "an't you 'most through? I 've got some ironing to do 'fore supper, and must use the table."

"Let me sit here and write half an hour longer," replied Martin, gathering up his manuscripts out of the widow's way. "I am on the last pages of the Romance. I can't leave it unfinished."

Mrs. Dabney was on the point of answering sharply; but, reflecting that Martin had been thus far quite a profitable boarder, she suffered him to remain in his place. He pursued his writing, therefore, while she brought out her ironing-cloths, unrolled a little bundle of sprinkled caps and collars, and spat upon the flat of an iron to try its temperature.

"Cheseboro'!" she exclaimed, in a shrill tone, close to Martin's ear, "do you 'tend to that churn!"

Cheesy, who had been lolling on the dasher, thinking of Lillifoo and Alphiddi, began to work with tremendous energy.

"I am churning," he growled. "I 've churned my arms 'most off, a'ready."

"Don't tell me! Let me see you leaning on that dasher once more, if you want me to come and help you! Don't spatter so!"

Thereupon Cheesy moved the dasher up and down, with sarcastic deliberation.

"I can churn without spattering, if you want me to," he muttered. "But I guess you don't know what you want yourself."

He did not intend this unfavorable commentary upon his step-mother's words for any ears save Martin's. Her sense of hearing was sharp, however, and the next moment his own ears tingled with repeated cuffs.

"I'll learn you to be sassy to me! Don't dodge, you sir! Put down your elbows. There!" Mrs. Dabney gave him a final crack on the crown of his head. "A boy fifteen year old! I should think you'd be ashamed!"

Martin, pained and disturbed, looked up from his writing.

"Did n't hurt," whispered Cheesy, winking in a style of reckless bravado, putting out his tongue, and squaring off at his step-mother.

"What's that?" she asked, turning quickly.

"I say the butter has come all 't will," he whimpered, looking down and churning with great assiduity.

The artifice saved him further punishment, and Mrs. Dabney proceeded with her small ironing. This finished, she began to set one side of the table for supper, crowding the author of the great Romance into still narrower quarters. At the same time, by a singular coincidence, he happened to be depicting the magnificent banquet given on the occasion of Lillifoo's marriage with her noble Alphiddi.

The red rays of a fine October sunset, showered through the crimson foliage of a tree that grew beside the cottage, were creeping across the table. They fell upon the gray plates and the worn Japan of the old bread-tray, gave the stingy lump of butter

a yellower hue, filled the mean little cups and saucers with subtle gold, and, moving further, further still, struck aslant upon the final page of the great Oriental Romance. In that light the joyous writer penned the concluding line. He regarded it as a happy omen.

"Gold! gold!" he exclaimed, springing to his feet and rubbing his hands gleefully.

"Gold?" repeated Mrs. Dabney, pausing, with a loaf hugged against her bosom, and a very thin slice cut half across. "Did you speak of gold?"

She finished the slice, and having cut it into three small pieces for the tray, held up the bread-knife, like an interrogation-point, waiting for Martin's answer.

"Golden fame!" he cried, stretching himself, with enthusiasm. "The Romance is ended! It is ready for the world!"

"By gracious!" cried Cheesy; "if it's finished, I want to hear that 'ere last chapter. I'll churn like thunder, if you'll have him read it, ma."

"Cheesy," said Martin, overflowing with benevolence, "you shall be gratified. Mrs. Dabney,"—taking up his manuscripts proudly, and clearing his throat,—"will you sit down and hear it?"

The widow said she could hear while she was about her work, and Martin prepared to read. He looked over the top of his manuscript, however, as she was placing the tarnished little tea-pot on the stove, to inquire what part that she had already heard pleased her fancy most.

"I like all that about Alphiddi's killing the lion," broke in Cheesy, in his ragged voice. "And where he swum the river with a dagger 'tween his teeth; and his telling Lillifoo all about

himself, when she thinks she is talking with a beggar; and about his hiding in the island —"

He stopped suddenly and began to churn, having observed the significant glance his mother gave him, as she hastily returned the tea-canister to its place.

"You better!" said she, grimly. "What part do I like best? O, I think the story about What-'s-his-name's finding the golden cave is interesting. That 's good, too, about the magic stone which turned chips into money. And I liked What-'s-her-name's housekeeping, after her father had lost all his property. In my opinion, them 's the best parts of the story."

Martin smiled, and, thanking her for the compliment, began to read.

"'At sunrise, on the fourth day after Alphiddi's abrupt departure, the lovely Lillifoo, stealing from the palace, glided unseen into the dewy garden, to breathe the odorous exhalations —'"

"Remember you 've got the cows to milk yet, to-night," said the widow, in an under tone, with a lowering glance at Cheesy.

"'— which are the prayers of flowers. As she passed on amid the fragrant mazes —'"

"I guess you don't mean to have no supper, neither, young man! You don't half churn."

"'— a thousand birds, fluttering from bough to bough, above her, shook from their melodious throats —'"

"Did n't somebody knock?" asked Mrs. Dabney.

"I did n't hear nobody," replied Cheesy, imploringly. "Don't bother so, ma!"

"'— shook from their melodious throats,'" Martin went on, "'a perfect shower of sweet sounds, which fell refreshingly upon her sorrowful soul. On either side —'"

"There 's that knocking again! Open the door, Cheseboro', and see what 's wanting."

Cheesy obeyed, with alacrity.

"It 's a couple of beggars, — beggars of Bagdad, I guess," he whispered, with a broad grin, over his shoulder.

"Send 'em away," spoke up Mrs. Dabney, loud enough for the visitors to hear. "We don't want to see no beggars, — there 's nothing for 'em here."

Martin hastened to look out. He saw a middle-aged man, with a care-worn, haggard face, leading a little girl. The mendicant was meanly dressed; he carried an oaken staff in his hand, and bore a pack strapped upon his shoulders.

"Go away!" said Cheesy, with an air of authority, standing in the doorway. "You won't get nothing here."

Martin felt hurt. To see the lessons of charity he had taken so much pains to inculcate in "The Beggar of Bagdad" so soon forgotten by the first persons to whom they had been imparted, wounded both his benevolence and his self-esteem. Besides, he naturally felt a professional interest in that class of persons to which Alphiddi had joined himself in the Romance. He accordingly laid his pen across the manuscript, got up from the table, and went to the door.

"Go in, Cheesy," said he. "You are an inconsistent fellow. The world laughs and cries over fictitious sufferings, while it drives real want from its doors; and you are just like it, Cheesy. I 'm ashamed of you," — pushing him back. "How fares it with you, neighbor?"

"Well, I thank you, sir," replied the man, in broken accents. "I only ask for a morsel of food for my child." His voice failed him, and, placing his arm with a tender and protecting touch

upon the girl's shoulder, he drew her affectionately towards him. "She is blind," he added, with emotion which could not have been feigned.

"The same old story!" exclaimed Mrs. Dabney, showing her scowl in the doorway. "I've heard it, or something like it, a hundred times."

"It may be," said the mendicant, meekly, bowing his head. "My child! — my child!" he articulated, fingering the curls upon her neck convulsively. Tears of passionate sorrow rushed to his eyes, and, running swiftly down his cheeks, fell into her soft brown hair.

"O, father!" she murmured, hiding her face in his rags, and clinging to his side, "don't cry! We will go now, dear father!"

"Come here; let me see your eyes," exclaimed Mrs. Dabney, severely. "They look nat'ral as any eyes, for aught I see."

She made a rude snatch at the child's arm; but the beggar stayed her hand.

"Not so," he said, with quivering lips. "She is a tender plant — she cannot bear rough usage."

"Humph!" sneered the widow, pushing the girl from her "Them 's as good eyes as mine, any day. You 're a drinking man, I know by your looks. We never know who 's impostors, and who an't."

"Give 'em the churning to eat," suggested Cheesy, in a hoarse whisper. "It never will come."

The child drew back, folding her little hands upon her breast, and stood waiting for her father. There was such meekness in her attitude, as she did so, and such sweet sadness — such patient sorrow — in her pale young face, that Martin could no longer control his impulses. His hand went instinctively into his pocket,

and brought forth some small pieces of money, which he proffered as the beggar was turning dejectedly away.

"Take this," he said, hurriedly. "It will buy you a supper at the tavern."

The beggar shook his head, and drawing the child towards him with the same air of touching tenderness Martin had before observed, walked slowly from the door.

"For her sake," added the young man, detaining him; "and may God bless her and you!"

He placed the money in the beggar's palm. The latter turned, as if he would speak; but he could only bow his head and move his lips inaudibly, and look gratefully at Martin through tears. And so he went away, with his staff shaking in his hand, and his fingers moving again convulsively in the blind girl's waving hair. Martin went in and closed the door.

"I am glad you can afford to give money to vagabonds in that way," observed the widow, with a grim smile.

"I never thought whether I could afford it or not," replied Martin, coloring slightly.

"O, no doubt you can!" with an ironical emphasis. "Of course, — Cheseboro', do you 'tend to that churn! — of course you have more money than you know what to do with!"

"I don't believe," said Martin, with a good-humored smile, "that I've got over a dollar in the world. Let me see," counting some change in his hand. "The Romance will set me up gayly; but, for the present, I'm bankrupt."

It was some seconds before the widow could speak, for choking.

"Why haven't you told me that before?" she demanded. "How's your board to be paid? Am I worse than a beggar?"

She choked again, and clutched her apron with her fingers, as

if so atrocious a swindle had quite taken her breath away, and well-nigh thrown her into an apoplexy.

"I believe," observed Martin, with dignity, "I am indebted to you now for only one week's board."

"Only one week's board! As if two seventy-five was n't an item! I did n't know I was supporting a beggar!"

"A beggar of Bagdad," suggested Cheesy to himself, grinning over the churn. "Le' 's hear that 'ere last chapter out," he added, in a louder tone, "any way."

"I won't hear a word on 't!" burst forth Mrs. Dabney. "I never see such worthless trash! It 's tried my patience enough a'ready. I could write better myself!"

Cheesy looked outrageously indignant at this slur upon "The Beggar," and grasped the dasher fiercely, as if he would have liked to knock his mother down with the churn.

"I think I have paid you promptly all along, until this week," remarked our author, with forced calmness. "And now I am willing to leave my trunk and clothes in your possession, as security, while I go to Boston and negotiate for the publication of my Romance; taking only such things with me as I shall need."

This proposition seemed to pacify the widow in a degree. She began to talk more reasonably, and inquired how Martin expected to be able to make a journey and live in a city without money.

"As for travelling, I can walk. Then I can live on a shilling a day till I dispose of my manuscript. Or, I can raise a hundred or two dollars on it at any time, you know, by leaving it in some publisher's hands."

He spoke with beautiful ingenuousness, whereat Mrs. Dabney who was very practical, smiled somewhat sarcastically.

"Why not?" he asked. "You don't think any honorable

publisher would wish to keep my Romance, if I chose to take it away again?"

"I should n't think any publisher would!" replied the widow, significantly.

"In the morning," resumed the sanguine Martin, "I shall set out for Boston. We will part good friends, at all events, Mrs. Dabney. Have you any errand for your friends in town? If you have, I shall be glad to do it."

The widow hesitated. Remembering that her brother Simeon kept a boarding-house, and entertaining rather narrow notions of city life, it struck her that his would naturally be the first place at which Martin would apply for board.

"Yes," said she, at length, brightening with an idea. "I'll give you a letter of introduction. Perhaps Simeon can take you to board. — Cheseboro',"— in a sharp voice, — "what are you doing?"

The boy was writing his name, in grotesque characters, "C DaBney eqs," on the creamy churn-cover.

"An't doing nothing," said he, promptly, sucking the shingle-nail which had served as a pencil, and beginning to work industriously; "only jes' looking to see if the butter was coming."

The discovery of Martin's poverty had not tended to soften the widow's heart. She had vials of wrath to pour out upon some one, and Cheesy's head was convenient. He did not foresee the calamity which threatened him, however, as she turned deliberately to enter the wood-shed, but entertained Martin the while by shutting up an eye, screwing up one side of his face, and putting his tongue out of the corner of his mouth. He also defied her valiantly with his fist; and afterwards, placing a thumb on his nose, and playing violent shakes with his fingers, turned an imag-

inary organ-crank with his other hand. In the midst of the last operation Mrs. Dabney surprised him; when, with an instantaneous change of manner, he appeared seriously busy at the churn, while he scratched his nose with an air of unimpeachable innocence.

But meekness availed him nothing. With anger gathered up in the wrinkles of her face, and with a tough hickory stick in her hand, the widow returned to the kitchen. Cheesy became pale with apprehension, and protested against injustice; but her ear was deaf to entreaties, and her hand was eager to chastise. In vain did Cheesy dodge, and put up his elbows, and hold up one foot, and dance around the pantry, and yell with pain at every successful blow inflicted on head or hands or legs; she continued to beat him, growing more and more vindictive, until, in a final effort to escape, he overturned the churn. Instantly a small river of cream flooded the kitchen floor and Martin's feet. The cover was thrown off and left stranded on the threshold, supported by the dasher, like the stern of a wreck, with the half-effaced letters, "C DaBney eqs," still visible.

The widow uttered a suppressed cry, at which Cheesy made a desperate plunge through her arms, forded the stream, and made three creamy tracks on his way to the wood-house, where he keeled out of the door, falling upon his head, arms and knees, in a heap. Mrs. Dabney followed, stick in hand; and Martin, not fully appreciating the entertainment, hastened to wipe his feet with a newspaper, took his hat from the pole, and left the house by the front-door.

II.

THE TRAVELLING COMPANIONS.

MARTIN found the open air more congenial to his feelings. The quiet village street, the homely fences, the old bridge over the brook, and the ostentatious field trees, which hung out their fluttering, gaudy shreds of gold and scarlet, refreshed him as he passed along. But the sky was the great attraction. The west was all aflame with the glories of sunset. Picturesque battlements and turrets and jagged walls shot up from purple crags of cloud, gilded with fire. It was a grand sky to rear airy castles in, and you may be sure Martin improved the occasion. His past had been a strange one, full of suffering and trial; but it was nothing to him now. All the mystery and trouble which had attended his childhood, the pale ghosts of disappointment and bad genii of passion which had since beset his spirit, were quite forgotten. The glorious future, which his warm soul upreared in the sunset sky, was all he felt or saw.

On his return to the cottage,— the two front windows of which,

that evening, looked more than ever like the widow's eyes, — he was met at the gate by Cheesy.

"Be ye going to Boston to-morrow morning, though?" asked the boy, with an anxious face.

"Yes, Cheesy; and I hope you 'll be a good boy, and remember me sometimes."

"I wish I was going with you. I do, by gracious! I can't live with her in this way."

Martin laughed at the poor fellow cheeringly, and, by way of encouragement, gave him his knife, which he had always admired.

Cheesy grinned a moment over the present; then began to snivel, as the feeling came over him that he was about to lose his only friend.

"I shall hate to have you go, the hardest kind," he articulated in his sleeve. "She uses me wus 'n wus, every day. I got away from her real slick, jes' now," he added, with a grin of cunning; "but I suppose" — glancing apprehensively at the house — "I shall have to ketch it when she gits hold of me. She han't hurt me much yit, but —" At that moment Mrs. Dabney appeared at the door, and, brandishing the hickory stick, requested Martin to seize that good-for-nothing, deliver him into her hands, and oblige her.

"Run, Cheesy!" whispered Martin. "Jump over the fence. — He won't let me," — addressing Mrs. Dabney, — "and I don't feel like racing."

On the whole, she concluded it was best to compromise the matter. "Come and get the pail," said she, "and milk the cows. I won't touch you."

"Set the pail down on the steps, and shet the door," replied Cheesy, "and I will."

She did as desired, and withdrew; but the moment Cheesy set foot upon the steps, she darted out upon him.

"There, you 've lied to me!" cried he, jumping upon the fence, "and I won't milk, to pay you for 't. Oo-oo-o——o!" crowing like a cock, and flapping his arms. "Don't you wish you could ketch me? Oo-oo-o——o!"

Mrs. Dabney smothered her indignation, — to use a mild word, — and returned to the kitchen, followed by Martin. She had already drank her three strong cups of tea; and, having diluted the contents of the tea-pot for her boarder, she set about writing the proposed letter of introduction. Cheesy, meanwhile, put his head in at the wood-house door, to impart the pleasing intelligence that somebody would be glad enough to lay hands on him that could n't, and to make a disinterested inquiry as to the mysterious individual who was expected to milk the cows. The widow took no apparent notice of him, but went on writing with great slowness and difficulty, and with painful contortions of her mouth, which Cheesy imitated with grotesque grimaces, for Martin's entertainment.

"If you 'll have Mr. Mer'vale read that 'ere last chapter," said he, "then I 'll go and milk. Say, will ye?"

The widow doubled up the sheet in awkward folds, sealed it with a big wafer, stamped it with her thimble, superscribed it with great care and deliberation; and having held it up to the window to criticize it, delivered it to Martin. The young man expressed his thanks, and wished to know if there was anything he could do for her in return.

"You know," said she, stealing a glance at Cheesy, "that I 've done a good many little things for you, this way and that, nothing was ever said about in our bargain. I don't mean to be mean,

speaking of 'em; but any such little present as a dress or a shawl, with a little snuff or tea thrown in, would n't be any more 'n fair, would it? Of course you'll get rich, and make your mark, and —" Watching Cheesy, with her revengeful thoughts on him, she let her voice sink to a disagreeable mutter. Martin quite mistook her meaning.

"My mark?" he echoed, quickly. "Did you say —"

She repeated the sentence more distinctly, reaching slyly to the window-sill for her stick.

"O!" said Martin, relieved. "I thought you meant, — that is, I thought you said you had seen, — never mind. Thank you."

Meanwhile Cheesy, to show his contempt for his step-mother's authority, was practising the audacious trick of putting his foot over his head, after the manner of circus-riders. For once he carried his insolence too far. Suddenly the widow rushed upon him, and, seizing him before he could disengage his ankle from his neck, beat him until he roared for mercy. Never before had Martin known Cheesy to receive so severe a punishment. He was on the point of interfering, to prevent fatal consequences, when the boy, by a desperate manœuvre, overturned his step-mother on a pile of potatoes, and ran, bellowing with pain and terror, out of the shed.

With sullen lips, and red and swollen eyes, and hands and face ridged with marks of the hickory-stick, Cheesy prowled about the village, mumbling over a bitter morsel of revenge, in lieu of supper, until all was dark and still in Mrs. Dabney's cottage. He then climbed in at the kitchen window, — having found the doors bolted against him, — and went to bed. But when the widow stole up to surprise him on the following morning, he was missing. Never but once, in all his life, — and that was one famous Fourth

of July, when fire-crackers were in contemplation, — had he been known to get up so early without being called, or pulled out of bed by the ears. The extraordinary occurrence filled Mrs. Dabney with apprehension. Nor did the discovery that he had worn off his Sunday roundabout, fustian trousers, and the shoes Martin gave him, taking with him his two extra shirts and other valuables, and leaving his every-day rags in the bed, console her for his loss. Her threats at the time would have made Cheesy's heart sink, miles away, could they have reached his ears; nor had they ceased exploding fitfully from her angry lips when the young author took leave of her and set out upon his journey.

Martin slung his bundle on a staff, shouldered it, and passed through the door-yard gate, just as the sun was rising. The fresh, ruddy rays came out of the luminous east, bearing golden associations of the land wherein his fancy had revelled so long, and welcomed him with faint kisses on his hopeful face.

The morning was quiet and chill. A clear sky, a bracing air, and a beautiful white frost painting the fields and the fences, inspired the young romancer with animation. It was the most joyous day his soul had ever seen arise; and never, in his happiest moments, had he beheld so many rainbows overarching his future, and paving his path with light. In the midst of all this glory, high up and bright, appeared the Beggar of Bagdad, in the character of Hope. His apparel was more magnificent than ever; it was purple, gold and scarlet; it was celestial. But whether it was printed in fast colors, which no rainy days could cause to fade, nor cold water of experience wash out, nor changeful weather bleach, Martin had yet to learn.

With his thread-bare coat buttoned across his chest, and his white hat — two seasons behind the style — tipped jauntily

against the sun, he gayly went his way. The village was left behind, with its lazy chimney-smokes and crowing cocks; the meeting-house steeple went down out of sight; and the refulgent robes of the morning swept away the frost. At length, as Martin approached a clump of sumachs that grew by the fence, he heard somebody whistling, to a slow and mournful measure, the "Road to Boston;" and presently a face appeared, looking through a cluster of crimson leaves.

"Is that you, Cheesy?" he asked. Thereupon an odd figure, pinched up in the tightest possible garments, jumped over the fence.

"What did she say?" asked the boy, with a sheepish grin.

"Her opinion of you is not very favorable, Cheesy; and I 'd advise you to run back, before she thinks worse of you."

"Ketch me going back!"

"Why, — what do you intend to do?"

"Don't know; an't going back, anyway," muttered Cheesy, with a sullen shake of the head. "Look o' there!" He showed his hands, which still carried marks of his flogging, and pointed out divers red streaks on his face. "I 'm all kivered with jes' sich scars. You can feel the ridges through my coat, if you 'll let me take your hand."

He began to sob with maddening recollections of his wrongs. Hugging his bundle — which bore a suspicious resemblance to a handkerchief Mrs. Dabney had missed — under one arm, he passed the other across his nasal organ. This last act was accompanied with danger and difficulty. His sleeve was so tight, that, to avoid bursting it, he was obliged to duck his face, and perform the operation with a double motion of his head. His general appearance served greatly to heighten the effect of this pleas-

ing exhibition. His roundabout, which had been a new one, made out of one of his father's old dress-coats, three years before, had been economized as a Sunday garment, until it seemed by a miracle that he ever squeezed himself into it. It was so short as not only to expose his waistbands and the ends of his leather suspenders, but also to betray a faint boundary-line of cotton shirt, which divided his upper from his lower hemisphere, like an equator. His fustian trousers were of corresponding fitness. The legs seemed to be on such very distant terms of friendship with his shoes, that one would have judged there must be a decided coolness between them that chill October morning. These deficiencies, together with a rip above his left knee, a modest gap which relieved the excessive tightness of his seat, and a few stitches started on his right shoulder, gave Cheesy the appearance of bursting out of himself, like those fruits which grow too large for their rind, and crack open with ripeness. His hat, which had been his father's, like his coat, was equally unique in its appearance. Time had battered its steeple-crown and narrow brim, until its original form and fashion were indistinguishable. This shaggy and venerable thing Cheesy wore far on the back of his head, as if his ears alone prevented it from shutting down over him, like an extinguisher. Add to this his smeared and wrinkled-up face, and one can readily appreciate the convulsed feelings with which the sympathetic Martin regarded his companion.

"She did n't hurt much," resumed the boy, in a moment of returning pride; "only she made me mad. I 'd a good notion to set the house afire; I could," he added, showing a bunch of matches. "'T any rate, I guess she 'll find the paper o' lam'-black emptied inter the bureau draws, and more 'n one pinch of snuff in the sugar-bowl!" He grinned, with his face still shining

in spots where he had wiped it; but the next moment he relapsed again into a convulsing sense of his sufferings, and sobbed, and ducked his head, and used his sleeve as before. Martin meanwhile earnestly counselled his immediate return.

"Don't tell me to go back!" he burst forth, with anguish. "I wish you 'd let me go with you. I 'll work, — work like a dog. — see if I don't."

"What can you do, poor fellow?"

"Why, I can git into a store, or su'thin' of the kind. I always thought I 'd like to be a clerk."

Martin smiled, and patted the lad's shoulder kindly, and told him that experience would teach him never to build castles in the air. *He* did not, of late years, he said, quite seriously.

"I 've got an uncle in Boston, — Uncle Jesse. He 'll git me inter some business, I know," insisted Cheesy. "So, if you won't let me go with you, I shall go alone."

"Come along, then!" cried Martin. "If you 're determined to run away, I 'll be as good a friend to you as I can. Now, stop snivelling, and whistle me the 'Road to Boston.'"

Cheesy's spirits went up like meadow-larks in spring. He giggled and capered around Martin delightedly; but his afflictions were still so recent, that he was obliged more than once to duck his head, strain up his sleeve and whet his oozy face upon it, as before.

"Why don't you whistle?" asked Martin, laughing, but winking away a tear of sympathy at the same time.

"I can't," articulated Cheesy. "My lips won't pucker."

"Never mind, then. You 're a good fellow, Cheesy. March ahead, and I 'll whistle for you."

The lad obeyed, giggling, and walked before Martin joyfully

and proudly, like a young soldier. "Why don't you whistle?" he asked presently, grinning over his left shoulder. Martin said he supposed it was because *his* lips would n't pucker.

"You 're laughing at me," observed Cheesy, good-naturedly.

"At you, and at myself too," replied Martin, in capital spirits. "What sort of a figure do I make, in this seedy coat and old white hat?"

"You look fust-rate!" exclaimed Cheesy, with genuine admiration. "I wish I did. I believe," glancing over his shoulder at his legs, "these trousers are gitting too small for me. They feel so, anyway."

"Never mind, Cheesy; I 've got the Beggar of Bagdad on my back, and he 'll do something for our wardrobe soon, depend upon it. I carry him as Sinbad the Sailor carried the Old Man of the Sea." The comparison was a reckless one. The next moment Martin was sorry it occurred to him. "Though I hope I shall not find my companion so terrible in the end," he added, "and so desperately hard to get rid of, as poor Sinbad's proved to be."

Cheesy giggled again, and marched on gayly, playing an imaginary fiddle over the bundle on his left arm, and breaking away some additional stitches on his shoulder in the enthusiasm of the moment. Martin followed with a thoughtful smile, bearing his burden lightly, and humming the air his lips had refused to whistle.

It was as pleasant a day as one could desire. The country all around was bright and glad. The blue hills which bounded sight looked soft and warm through their autumnal haze. The foliage of the woods flushed out in richest tints and dyes, and the meadows basked in the soft flood of light poured out upon them from the golden horn of the sun. Our travellers were passed and repassed

by vehicles; in the fields, at farm-house windows, and in the doors of barns, they beheld the inhabitants of the land; and everybody they saw looked at them curiously, and seemed to be amused. Some youngsters in a cart, driving an ox-team, laughed and shouted as they passed, and made absurd inquiries, in a friendly way, concerning Cheesy's mother. Then a pleasant old man drove up in a homely old chaise, and fell into conversation with Martin, who told him rather more about his schemes than redounded to his credit; upon which the benevolent gentleman, advising him kindly to return home with his companion and find some honest employment, bade them good-morning and drove on.

At noon the pedestrians entered a grove, and, sitting down on a log, partook of crackers and cheese. As a dessert, Cheesy produced from the midst of his shirts a large block of gingerbread, which he had stolen from Mrs. Dabney's pantry. Breaking it across his knee, he generously offered the largest piece to Martin; but the latter, on account of conscientious notions touching stolen property, or from prejudice against the general contents of Cheesy's bundle, respectfully declined the luxury. Having counted on affording his friend an agreeable surprise, the lad was a good deal disappointed; he crammed his mouth with the gingerbread, however, and appeared to enjoy it hugely, notwithstanding his chagrin.

Having finished their meal, the travellers drank at a brook which ran babbling through the grove. Cheesy attempted first to use the crown of his hat as a dipper; but, as it was too leaky to hold water, he concluded to resort to a still more primitive way of drinking. He got down upon his face, with his mouth full of gingerbread, and got up again with a dripping nose and chin, bursting out his left knee, and choking and coughing violently.

Martin daintily drank from a spot a yard or two above, notwithstanding Cheesy's earnest recommendation of the place where his own features had been dipped, and where several sinking crumbs were still visible.

The weather changed a good deal before night. The spirits of the young gentlemen also underwent degrees of variation. Footsore, weary, a little disheartened, — especially Cheesy, — and anxious about lodgings, they arrived in sight of an old red schoolhouse, on the corner of two lonely roads, just as a chill, sullen autumn rain was setting in. The gloom of evening was gathering fast; the town where Martin had purposed to spend the night was still two miles distant, and Cheesy proposed that they should sleep in the school-house.

"You would n't ask 'em to keep us where we stopped to rest and git a drink," said the boy, "'cause you 're too proud. You need n't be afraid to stop here, though; nobody 'll see us."

Feeling the necessity of economizing his finances, Martin thought the school-house would, for one night, be preferable to a hotel. "If we can get in," he suggested to his companion.

Cheesy said he would see, and went around to the door, which fronted on the cross-road. He came limping back, however, scowling and glancing over his shoulder. "Them very same beggars 'at stopped 't our house yes'day are settin' on the steps," said he, in a whisper. "I come pretty nigh pitchin' right on to 'em."

Martin looked up anxiously at the rainy sky, and, hastening round the corner, met the beggar and his child, as they were setting out again upon the road.

"How goes it to-night, my friend?" he asked.

The wanderer gave Martin a look of surprise, and, touching his hat in humble recognition, said, "Well, — very well."

"It is a bad night," returned Martin, glancing at the sweet face of the patient child. "I hope you have not far to go."

"I hope not far, indeed. There is a house on the hill yonder; but we are not certain of being well received there. I only wish for a shelter for my child," faltered the man, with a look of anguish, as he tenderly arranged her little hood. "For myself, I can lie on the ground, — under the fences, — anywhere."

"There 's a lock on the door," cried Cheesy, from the steps. "But the staple 's loose. I can pull it out. Shall I?"

The rain was beginning to patter down thick and fast. Martin laid his hand kindly upon the beggar's arm.

"Don't think of going on with her to-night," he said. "Let us stop here. We can make a bed for her of our coats; and, if there is a stove, we will soon have a fire to warm her."

"It 's out, slick enough!" ejaculated Cheesy, who had been prying on the staple with a stick. "Hurra! the door 's open!"

It required but little urging to induce the wanderers to go in out of the storm. "Are you afraid of me?" asked Martin, lifting the child carefully up the steps.

"O, no!" she replied, with a faint smile. "I liked you, the minute I heard you speak yesterday."

Her gentle voice touched chords of sympathy deep down in Martin's heart. He pressed her little hand, and stooped to kiss her brow. But the beggar hurriedly placed his arm around her, with jealous care, and guided her before him through the entry.

The school-room was gloomy and chill. But Martin and Cheesy went to work, and, with the help of matches and a knife, had soon succeeded in starting a fire. Cheesy brought in big arm-fulls of wood, as if he expected to pass a polar winter in the place, and did not mean to be short of fuel.

III.

THE STORY OF BLIND ALICE.

SNAPPISHLY and briskly cracklod the fire; and presently the sullen stove uttered a low, musical roar, like a sentient animal, deeply grateful for such comforting cheer. In half an hour the room was warm, and, the stove-door being thrown open, the blazing wood cast a pleasant flickering glow upon the floor, the table, the rows of desks and the wall beyond. Cheesy then lounged about on the benches, studying hieroglyphics carved thereon with school-boy knives, — tomahawks, houses, ships, rude profiles and ruder letters, — and seemed to enjoy the novelty of his discoveries in a high degree.

Meanwhile Martin assisted his new acquaintance to prepare a resting-place for himself and child. Having turned down a chair before the stove, the wanderer rested his back against it, sitting upon the floor. He then spread down a garment, taken from his pack, for the girl to lie upon, and took her head affectionately upon his lap. "Are you comfortable, my child?" he asked.

"Dear father, you are so good!" she murmured, weeping gently, and pressing his hand upon her heart. She smiled sweetly, and the fire-light painted her fair young face with a mellow glow.

"She must be very weary," said Martin, in a low tone. "How have you managed to get over so much ground with her to-day? You could not have travelled very far last night."

"We got a chance to ride on a load of grain in the morning," replied the man. "Afterwards a gentleman in a chaise helped us over four or five miles of the road."

"An old gentleman, in a rather dilapidated chaise?"

The man replied in the affirmative, and inquired if he was not the person the old gentleman had spoken of, who was going to Boston to publish a Romance. Martin, glowing with unusual heat about the face, pleaded guilty to the charge. The beggar could not repress a smile. Thereupon the young author, convinced that his new companion possessed an intelligent and discerning mind to recognize the merits of his Romance, proposed to read a few pages thereof, to show that his literary schemes were not quite so extravagant as the old gentleman in the chaise had supposed.

"Don't think I 'm vain," he observed, with charming ingenuousness, undoing his bundle. "And, if I bore you, say so."

"Read that 'ere last chapter," spoke up Cheesy, tumbling over the benches and landing by the stove. "I han't heard that yit."

Martin cleared his throat, and, perching himself on a bench, assumed a position favorable to receiving the fire-glow on his manuscript. After a few preliminary remarks, he began with the opening chapter; while Cheesy, who could have listened to fifty consecutive readings of the same pages with unwearied interest, sprawled himself out on the seat beside him, grinning and glowing in the light, and chuckling with pleasure. The beggar seemed less susceptible to the beauties of fine writing; for, after hearing Martin read a few paragraphs, in an eloquent manner, peculiarly adapted to the flowery style of the composition, he

relapsed into an abstracted mood, and studied the sweet face of his child, and smoothed her brow, and played tenderly with her soft. warm hair, as she lay smiling faintly on his lap. At length Martin paused, to observe the effect of a fine passage on his audience; and the beggar, looking up with a face overshadowed by grief, remarked that it appeared to be a story of a beggar.

"That 's the title," cried Cheesy; "The Beggar of Bagdad."

Martin had purposely suppressed the title, to avoid giving offence; but Cheesy's indiscretion exposed him; and, stammering a little with confusion, he inquired how his new friend liked the subject. The latter looked down again, fingering the blind girl's hair, and answered, in a tone of indifference, that it would do.

"O, it was so beautiful!" said the gentle voice of the child.

Martin's heart swelled with pleasure and pride.

"What was so beautiful?" her father inquired.

"What I saw," she replied, smiling and pressing his hand again upon her heart. "I think I must have been dreaming."

Martin bit his lip, and put up his manuscript, notwithstanding Cheesy's earnest protestation against such a proceeding.

"There were seven girls, — O, so beautiful!" the child went on, after a pause. "They were dressed in white and sitting on beds of flowers. They were sewing garments for the poor, and weeping. I felt so sorry for them! but, after a while, I saw that their tears made them pure and bright, and that the flowers were scattered there by poor people who came to thank them. Then the flowers all grew to be little angels, — O, so little and pretty! And they flew up, carrying the girls with them, on a cloud. I tried to see more; but the cloud dazzled me, and I woke up."

The light of the cloud seemed still to linger on the radiant face of the child. Martin regarded her with deepening interest, quite

forgetful of the slight his Romance had received, and asked if she often had such dreams.

The beggar's tears were falling on her hair; his lips quivered, and his fingers shook. He looked up soon, however, with a face full of emotion, and pointed to Martin's bundle.

"I don't like it," said he, with a sad shake of the head. "You go too far for your hero. Homely truth is stronger and better than all your fine fictions. Let me tell you a story."

Martin smiled and nodded, as much as to say, "Criticism is what I like; I don't feel hurt; go on."

"Once there was a man named Caleb Thorne. He had for a wife a woman who was all love and devotion; and they had a child, — a darling girl, — they called Alice. Until that child was a year old, the parents were happy as ever mortal pair could be. But Caleb had a demon. That demon was an appetite for strong drink. He came honestly by it, as people say. He inherited it, — for children inherit such things to the third and fourth generation. His father had been a moderate drinker, — at least, he was called so; but Caleb's love of liquor was a species of insanity, a taint in the blood. Three times had he descended into the pit of drunken degradation, and been three times restored, before marriage. But, when his child was a year old, he fell again. The ruin which followed him was terrible and complete. He lost his property. His wife — that noble and devoted woman — clung to him, trying to hold him up, until the demon dragged his feet over her crushed form. The child was eight years old when the mother went to her grave. Enraged against his demon, Caleb Thorne turned upon him, and drove him down into the bottomless pit. Sorrow gave him strength. He worked — he vowed before God to work with his life — for the motherless child. But the demon

watched him. Once more, in an hour of temptation, he seized him — by the throat," added the speaker, with a hollow laugh. "Caleb Thorne was drunk in a tavern. The child — instinct told her what had happened. The spirit of her mother was within her. Four miles among rocks and thickets she walked, tearing her tender feet, to find her drunken father and bring him home. She sought him out in the midst of fumes and smoke which would have polluted one less pure. Consternation at seeing *her* in such a place mastered his senses for the moment, and he suffered her to lead him away. She took him back across the fields, to avoid exposing their disgrace and shame. But he staggered and fell oftentimes, dragging the child down with him, and bruising her limbs, so that night and a storm overtook them on their way. Such a storm of wind, and rain, and sleet! It was in December —"

The speaker sat silent for some seconds, with his head bowed down above the gently-heaving bosom of the child, who appeared sleeping again, and smiling in her sleep; then resumed his story.

"When that wretch recovered his consciousness, after the wild scenes through which he passed that night, he was lying on his own bed, in his own ruined home. How he got there he could not tell. The child had led him on; but the child — she did not know when it was morning, — it was night to her still, when the sun arose, — she was blind." He pressed his daughter's temples with his hands, and rained hot tears upon her face.

"Caleb Thorne fought back the demon once again," he went on; "the perjured man vowed solemnly to God, — and vowed to keep his vow, — that he would devote life and soul to the child, whose mother he had killed, and whose sight had been sacrificed to his demon. Her eyes had always been delicate. Her mother had been blind before her, when a girl; but she had been cured.

And it now became the sole desire of Caleb's heart to save money enough out of his poverty to travel to Boston with his child, and see the old physician who had restored the mother's sight years before. But sickness sapped his efforts. He could barely support life in himself and child. And at length, despairing of ever seeing better times, he set out to walk with her to Boston."

"But," cried Martin, who had become intensely interested, "there are asylums for the blind —"

The beggar interrupted him. "Since this calamity befell the child, Caleb Thorne has never once suffered her out of his sight. He cannot now be separated from her for a moment Her presence is his life. What do you say, Alice?" he inquired, as the child smiled again, and moved her lips.

"Mother says she forgives you. O, she loves you so much!"

"You have been dreaming, child," articulated the beggar.

"O, yes! but I saw my mother, — I know her smile!" That smile seemed reflected in the child's face as she spoke. "And she says I need not weep because I am blind. If I am good, and love everybody, she says, I shall have such dreams as I had just now. I dream, but I am not asleep. And the skies, and the flowers, and the faces I see, look more beautiful than anything I ever saw with my eyes. O, I am so happy, dear father!"

"By gracious!" burst forth Cheesy, who had listened to the beggar's story with open eyes and mouth. "You ought 'er bring that into the Romance, somehow, Mr. Mer'vale. Call it in Bagdad, and it 'll sound fust-rate."

Martin bent silently over his bundle, arranging the manuscript sheets, which were afterwards found to have been blistered here and there with tears. Having told his story, the beggar manifested little disposition to converse. He bent over and kissed his

child good-night, then reclined his head against his pack, as if to sleep. But, long after Martin had lain down upon the bench, with his bundle for a pillow, — while Alice dreamed and smiled, and Cheesy snored by the stove, — Caleb Thorne was awake, watching the fire with haggard eyes, and listening to the rain upon the panes. At length he too fell asleep; but in unquiet dreams he started oft, and groaned, and sometimes cried aloud, and flung his arms about him, and knotted up his face in agony and terror.

On the following morning the storm had ceased; the sun shone brightly, and the wayfarers left the school-house in company. Caleb, silent and reserved, seemed jealous of Martin, whom Alice had asked, with sweet simplicity, to walk beside her, because she liked to feel that he was near. He could not bear that any other hand than his should touch his child; and the young man, unwilling to give him pain, walked on with Cheesy, telling Alice, kindly, that he would not leave her far behind. This deference to his whim quite humbled Caleb, who came out of his reserve, begged Martin's pardon, and let him further into his confidence than he had done before. Afterwards the two parties travelled side by side, Alice next to Martin, whom she could tell from Cheesy as well as if she saw him, though he never spoke; and so kept on, beguiling the way with stories and friendly talk, until the city, with its heaped-up roofs around the State-house dome, and windows flashing back the sunset rays like walls of fire, appeared in view. Then Martin began to dilate with thoughts of literary glory; Cheesy burst out of himself, more than ever, with wonder, talking largely; blind Alice seemed more meek and timid than before, and drooped her head; while Caleb Thorne, with deepening shadows on his face, looked darkly down upon the ground, and often sucked in his hissing breath 'twixt firm-set teeth.

"I shall keep my vow that I have vowed before God; shall I not, Alice?" he muttered, in a strange tone.

"Yes, dear father! you will — I know you will!"

"I will! — to be sure I will! God help your father, Alice! You know how I have all along avoided spots where rum is sold; but the town is full of temptations. Don't be afraid, though. I shall keep my vow; shall I not, my child?"

The blind girl said again she knew he would; yet drooped her head more sadly than before. And thus the party crossed a long bridge, and entered Boston just at dusk. They went up into the town, where vehicles thundered around them, and people passed and repassed them, and gas-lights flared thus early on the streets, and everything was new, unnatural and strange.

"Does Boston look as you expected, Cheesy?" asked Martin.

"I had no ide' 't was settled so clust here," was the boy's reply. "By gracious! now all I want to see is a fire!"

And, with his facial organs extended with a drinking-in expression of wonder, he elbowed his way along in his tight jacket-sleeves, treading high, and grinning good-naturedly at every supposed friend who laughed at his ludicrous figure.

Meanwhile the beggar walked fast, and seemed to hold his breath between his teeth. "Dear father," said Alice, bewildered, "what is the matter? O, father, I am afraid!"

"Don't let me go!" he muttered hoarsely. "Hold me, Alice, — hold me fast!" A passion worked upon his face and burned in his eyes, as if the demon of his life were torturing him again.

"O, father! I am afraid!" repeated Alice, clinging closer still. "Something makes my head go round and round. Is it the noise of the street? Do you feel it, father? Why does your arm shake so!"

"Hold fast, my child!" gasped Caleb Thorne. "Never let go my arm, or we are lost. — We might not find each other easily in the crowd, you know," he added, quickly. "That is all. Don't be afraid; yet hold tight, my Alice!"

Elate with hope, and excited by the novel scenes he saw, Martin did not observe the change which had come over Caleb. He walked before with Cheesy, who was extremely diffident about meeting his step-mother's relations, and discussed a plan for communicating with that young gentleman in the morning. But, before any arrangement was agreed upon, a dire commotion took place in the street. There was a tremendous rush of feet, with cries of fire, and bells began to ring out wild alarms. Then an engine rattled along the street, dragged on by shouting men and screaming boys. Cheesy's mind was wrought up to a high pitch of excitement by this startling event. He ran out under the very hoofs of a span of horses, and, recoiling suddenly with the instinct of self-preservation, flung himself into the stomach of a fireman in oil-cloth cape and helmet, who kicked him out of the way with a muttered curse. Cheesy fell upon his side, with a jar; but, nothing daunted by these mischances, he scrambled to his feet, looking after the engine, and yelling fire; then stripped off his jacket and short vest with enthusiasm, holding his bundle between his knees. "Hurra, boys!" he cried to his companions. "Come on!" Thereupon Martin, who had more discretion than the boy, notwithstanding a lively curiosity he felt about the fire, requested him not to make a fool of himself, but to keep close to his side while the crowd rushed by. The noise was such, however, that Cheesy did not hear; but, understanding from Martin's gestures that he would wait for him there, he twisted his jacket and vest round his bundle, tossed them at his head, and darted away. A pair of

tight fustian trousers, cotton shirt-sleeves, and leather suspenders, crossed behind, might then have been seen mingling with the crowd; until, seizing the engine-rope, Cheesy hurried with it round the corner, losing himself as completely, amid the clash and clamor of the alarm, as if he had been suddenly dropped in the streets of Bagdad, — with which, by the way, he was far more familiar than with the streets of Boston.

Martin took up the boy's personal property, which had fallen into the gutter, and watched those crossed suspenders disappearing in the distance with flying legs and arms, until they were no longer to be seen. Then, with considerable disgust, he turned to look for his other companions. To his astonishment, he saw that they too had disappeared. Excited by such a strange crushing together of confusing events, he ran out in the street and glanced hurriedly up and down; when, standing upon a corner, some rods below, he saw blind Alice, alone, and almost frantic with terror, crying and holding her clasped hands tight upon her face. In a minute he was at her side.

"Where is your father?" he asked, hurriedly.

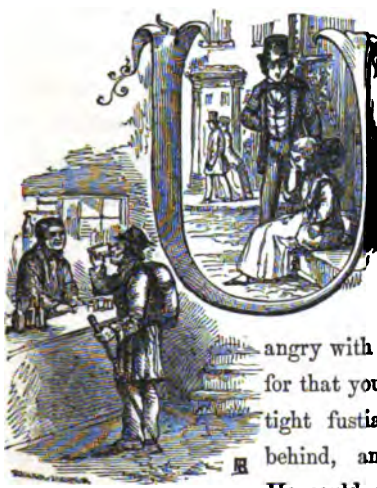
"O, sir, find him!" she exclaimed, clinging to him in her wild despair. "He said he would come right back, and left me here. O, find him! — find him for me!"

"Where shall I look for him, my poor child?" replied Martin.

O, dear! she did not know. And Martin, all unused to city scenes and ways, did not guess that the hand he had had a glimpse of lifting a half-filled glass to eager lips, in the sallow gas-light of a low cellar in the alley close by, was the hand of Caleb Thorne; and that the money which paid for that, and other drams that followed, was the same himself had placed in the beggar's palm, with a blessing on his now forsaken child, two nights before.

IV.

IN THE GREAT CITY.



UP and down the street went Martin, in an anxious, hurried, unavailing search. No Caleb Thorne, with burden and with staff, nor beggar of any sort, was to be found. The young man was bewildered and perplexed. He was also inclined to be very angry with Cheesy. He looked in vain for that young gentleman's shirt-sleeves, tight fustians, and suspenders crossed behind, amid the scattered throngs. He could at one time have used Mrs. Dabney's hickory stick upon him with considerable satisfaction; but the next moment his feelings softened. "He is more of a simpleton than a knave," thought he. "He has n't a dime in the pockets of those fustian trousers, and I have got his jacket and bundle! The rascal, to run off so! He won't find his uncle to-night, and what he will do for supper and lodgings is more than I know. Poor fellow, I could shake him, if I had him here!"

Meanwhile the evening had darkened, and there was a wildness

in the aspect of the street, with its people hurrying to and fro, each intent on his own selfish thoughts, regardless of all the world beside, and with the tall lamps glaring down upon them as they passed. The strangeness of the scene so wrought upon Martin's imagination, that he could scarce believe it was not all a dream. He had glanced in at shop windows, and around dark corners, and up and down cross streets, for Caleb and Cheesy, keeping watch at the same time over Alice, whom he had left with his property in the doorway of a shoe-store, and taking care that he did not himself get lost, until his head grew dizzy, and he discovered that he had twice put his face into an empty dust-barrel, in the absurd hope of finding something or somebody he was in search of. At the same time, he seemed to be looking for the Beggar of Bagdad, who had somehow got out of the Romance, while Caleb Thorne, who had somehow got into it, lay tied up in his bundle at the blind girl's feet.

At length he gave up the useless search, and returned to the shoe-store where he had left Alice. He was just in time to see the noble proprietor of that establishment appear and order the child off his steps, while he pushed away the property she was guarding with his foot. Martin remonstrated, and explained the circumstances of the case.

"You 're a little green, I see," said the shopkeeper, with a pitying look at the young romancer "If these are your traps, you 'd better take 'em, and get out of the way as soon as you can. You won't make anything by befriending such people. If you 're shrewd, you 'll cut, and leave the watch to take care of 'em."

The idea of extricating himself from his difficulty in so simple and expeditious a manner had not before entered Martin's brain. He looked at the shopkeeper in astonishment.

"Anyhow," the latter added, "I can't have my door stopped in this way. That's all I 've got to offer." And, having offered it, he retired, leaving Martin more astonished than before.

The poor blind child's distress recalled him to himself. Wildly she wrung her little hands, and pressed them to her face amid her tangled hair, trying to smother her sobs. Martin sheltered her kindly with his arm, and uttered some incoherent words of sympathy and consolation. But nothing could quiet her grief.

"You went too far!" she exclaimed, in tones of anguish. "I'm sure father is near me. Is n't there a place close by — where he would be apt to go?" she asked, with tremulous eagerness. "O, look for him — you know where!"

Sobs choked her utterance, but Martin had caught her meaning. "Bewildered fool that I am," thought he, "not to have guessed as much before!" Once more his eye wandered to the cellar round the corner. He remembered the hand he had had a glimpse of in passing, half an hour before, — the hand that raised a half-filled glass in the gas-light, down in that underground retreat; and he felt a strong conviction that Caleb Thorne was there. He hastily removed Alice, with the property, which had been kicked into the street, to a neighboring doorway, and, telling her to wait for him there, promised to make one more attempt to find her father.

"O, thank you! — thank you!" she cried, amid her sobs, with a sudden flaming-up of hope. "You are so good! My dear, dear father! You will find him, — won't you?"

"My poor child, I think I will, indeed. But you must not worry so, at any rate. There; sit down on the bundles, and be quiet. Don't cry, Alice."

His words of sympathy and kindness dropped like honey upon

the bitter grief of her soul; and, as he went away, she brushed back her hair, and covered her face with her hands, thanking him and praying for him in the innermost recesses of her heart.

Martin descended the steps of the low cellar. The door, which had been open when he saw the hand, was closed now; but he lifted the latch and entered. A sallow room, clouded with cigar-smoke, and lighted by a single gas-burner, received him. On one side was a row of ancient chairs, and on the other a bar, before which two men were eating raw oysters, while another emptied a glass of liquor down his throat. The last stood up beneath the burden of a pack, and, grasping the tumbler fiercely as he drank, steadied himself with a staff.

"Mr. Thorne," said Martin, laying his hand upon his arm.

Caleb set down the glass, and turned upon his friend with a wild and haggard look, which gave him a shock of horror.

"I am coming, — I am coming," said he, fumbling in his pocket with a shaking hand. "Poor Alice! — is she waiting? Don't tell her. I should have died without it. I was on fire, — I was burning up. One more glass, and I will go."

He laid a bit of change upon the counter, and called for gin. The keeper of the place, whose smooth features and oily hair looked warm and shiny in the gas-light, swept the money into a drawer, and placed a decanter before him.

"No! no! — no more!" cried Martin, staying his hand. "Not another drop. You know the effect. Think of your poor blind child!"

Caleb turned again, with an angry light in his eyes; but, at mention of that crushed, forsaken, helpless girl, his hand slid from the counter, and he reeled away, falling heavily upon a chair. Thereupon Martin, who perceived the danger of taking

him into the street before Alice was provided for, explained the case to the shining head behind the bar.

"You see it will not do for him to have any more liquor —"

"All right!" growled the bar-tender, replacing the decanter, without the faintest gleam of compassion in the smooth, warm face the gas-light shone upon.

"I am going to take care of his blind child," resumed Martin. "I will come back for him in half an hour."

"All right."

"If you will be sure and keep him here —"

"All right!" muttered the shining head. "I understand."

Caleb meanwhile swayed to and fro upon his chair, groaning and grinding his brow with his clinched hand. Martin spoke to him kindly, promising to come for him soon.

"I 'll go, — I 'll go now," muttered Caleb, staggering to his feet. "My child! — my child! She is waiting, then? Poor Alice! But I shall die without that other glass. I 've paid for it, and I will have it."

"All right," said the bar-tender, in answer to Martin's appealing look. He rested his elbows on the counter, and confronted Caleb, still without any gleam or glimmer of pity in his face. "Go ahead. All right."

Trusting to the honor and conscience of the man, Martin renewed his promise to Caleb, took leave of him, and ran out. He hastened to rejoin Alice, and found her sitting on the bundles with her hands pressed upon her face, as he had left her; but, before he had spoken, as if she knew his step among a hundred others, she started up quickly, and pressed his arm.

"You have found him! — you have found him!" she cried, eagerly; "I know you have!"

"Yes, dear child, I have," he answered, drawing her tenderly to his side.

"Where is he, then? Something has happened to him! O, father! — my dear father! I know now why I was afraid! O, lead me where he is!" pleaded the girl. "I can bring him away."

"So can I, and so I will," returned Martin, cheerfully. "But let me take you to a place of safety first, and prepare a place for him. You are quite worn out with fatigue and trouble, my poor Alice. You must not remain here, where ruffian shop-keepers can kick you from their doors. I will leave you with friends, and come back for your father."

The blind girl's intuitions were so fine that she needed only to hear the sound of Martin's voice to know that he was worthy of all trust; yet not without sore trouble of heart did she consent to go with him, and leave her parent behind.

"Do you think the man will certainly keep him?" she inquired, still holding back, after he had told her all.

"I think he will. I know he will, in fact," he replied, confidently; "for he is a man. Now let us be gone."

He endeavored to convince himself that he was acting wisely, and for the best; but, somehow, when he shouldered Cheesy's property with his own, and took the hand of Alice, he experienced miserable misgivings. It was partly on Cheesy's account, and partly on Caleb's; he also felt a brother's anxiety about the child; but no selfish fear concerning his own welfare found place in his heart for a moment. He therefore quieted the whisperings of his conscience, and, leading the child away, walked up the street, with a last faint hope of meeting Cheesy. No Cheesy was to be seen, however, and Martin was compelled to

postpone the anticipated pleasure of a reünion with that young gentleman for an indefinite period.

Remembering that his letter of introduction was addressed to Portland-street, Martin inquired his way thither, closely observing what turns he made, with a view to retracing his steps. He found Portland-street without difficulty; but he also found, to his dismay, that the letter was gone from his pockets. He put down his bundles near a street-lamp, and fumbled in his clothes with both hands, without making any discovery which gave a clue to the missing document.

"This, then, is Boston," said he, with a sad attempt at humor; "and this is my first adventure. The beginning is bad enough to insure a glorious ending, if there is any truth in the old adage."

"I give you so much trouble!" sighed Alice, waiting patiently at his side.

"That 's nothing. You did n't lose the letter for me, did you?" returned the young man, rallying at once. "But the letter is of no consequence, anyway. There are other boarding-houses in Boston, besides Mr. Wormlett's; and I think I 've money enough to pay for one night's lodging, if no more. Then, in the morning, I will see what my Bagdad friend is going to do for me."

Martin was in such good spirits that Alice felt quite encouraged, — as he intended she should feel, without doubt. But Heaven knows how darkened and perplexed was his own breast at the time. Fatigued in mind and body, a stranger in a strange city, helpless himself, yet feeling that upon his exertions depended so much, he knew not what to do first, or which way to turn. While he was hesitating, a small boy ran by in the street, and, putting his foot sharply down in a puddle, bespattered him from boot to elbow with thin mud.

"Hillo!" cried Martin; "is that the way young gentlemen in Boston treat strangers?"

With an odd jerk of his head, and a twist of his little wiry body, the boy stopped, turning up in the lamp-light the oldest face Martin had ever seen on such young shoulders.

"Where was the fire?" he asked, without the least manifestation of concern for the damage he had done. "Say, do you know?"

"I don't know, sir," replied Martin, glancing at his bespattered pantaloons. "You 'd better find out. Run past it three times, through a respectable puddle, with that skilful foot of yours, and you 'll put it out."

Curbing his chin and jerking his head again, the boy looked up with a cunning leer, and remarked that he did n't care, he was rich enough.

"Rich enough? What has that to do with drenching people with mud?" asked Martin, vacantly.

"I 've got fifty-six cents in money and pa 's got two dollars more belongs to me on interest," returned the boy, in a breath.

Still revolving in his mind whether he should ring at the first door, or go on until he met some person who could give him the information he required, Martin asked the boy — vacantly, as before — what his name was.

"Sim Wormlett, pa 's a rich man, — keeps a boarding-house and a grocery."

"Simeon Wormlett? That 's just the man I want to see! I 've got a letter for your father, boy, if I have n't lost it. Show me where you live, and I 'll remember it of you."

"Will ye gi' me fo'pence?" asked Sim, curbing his chin again, and looking up with the same cunning leer on his old face.

Martin produced the stipulated sum, with a request that he might be shown to the boarding-house quickly, for he was in great haste. The boy ran up eagerly for his reward, clasped it in his hand and examined it in the lamp-light, twisting his under jaw over his right shoulder, and expanding his lips into a disagreeable grin. Having satisfied himself that he was not the victim of a swindle, he shut up the money in his fist, and hopped along on the side-walk triumphantly.

"Come this way, we live right here," he chuckled, swinging his hand which contained the treasure. "That 's grampa sweeping where we had our coal got in this afternoon, he wanted me to help but I would n't he can do it alone, I don't care for him, I 'm going to keep grocery when I 'm ten years old pa says."

Rattling on in this way, with a reckless disregard of punctuation, the little old boy skipped along, with odd motions of his head, body and limbs; while Martin followed more slowly, leading Alice. They had not far to go. The old man Sim had pointed out was at work under the next street-lamp. He was sweeping some dust and bits of anthracite upon a shovel, with slow, unsteady hands, and scolding incoherently to drive away a couple of ill-dressed little girls, who stood near by, with baskets on their arms, their poverty-stricken faces turned with wistful glances at the small heap of waste fuel he had swept together. Once he threatened them with his broom, then with a lump of coal; but they kept beyond the reach of the first article, and probably knew him too well to believe he would risk the loss of the second, by heaving it — as he declared he would do — at their heads. At the approach of Simeon and his new acquaintances, however, they ran away, casting timid glances behind them, like

sheep at sight of a dog, as if they had experienced somewhat of that active youth's canine character before, and expected he would be set upon them by the angry old man.

The latter was getting down, with great difficulty, to scrape up with his hands what dust and bits of coal he could not sweep upon the shovel, scolding and shaking still, when young Sim darted at him suddenly, stabbed him in the ribs with his fingers, and described an eccentric half-circle around him, with a backward shuffle of his feet.

"Here 's a man to see pa grampa." The boy appeared to jerk out his sentences with nervous twitches of his head. "He gi' me fo'pence for showing him where we live, — says he 's got a letter for him. Say grampa where 's pa, do you know grampa? Has he come home to supper yit, — say?"

The old man got up slowly, with one hand upon his back, to assist him in the work of straightening himself, and began sharply to find fault with the boy for "pitching into him" in that abrupt and disagreeable manner.

"Now, git up the rest of that coal for me, will you, hey?" he demanded, still holding his back with his hand.

"What 'll you gi' me?" returned Sim, showing the money Martin had paid him, with an aggravating flourish. "Say, will ye gi' me two cents? Or I 'll do it for a cent seeing it 's you."

The old man seemed highly incensed at this mercenary proposal. He made an angry sweep at his shrewd grandchild, stretching out his long, bony fingers for a revengeful clutch. But Sim hopped into the street and backed off, mocking him with shakes of his head, in imitation of palsy.

"That 's the way you do, — jes' so; see, grampa! Come, will ye gi' me a cent? You won't git that coal in, all night, alone."

MARTIN MEETS SPECIMENS OF THE WORMLETT FAMILY. p. 47.

The old man made no further attempt to capture him, but got down on the ground and scraped up the coal-dust which had occasioned the quarrel.

"I 'll git holt on ye, by'mby, young man," he kept muttering, in his harsh treble. "You 'll see. You won't gain nothing, I tell ye. Would n't pick up a little handful of coal, to save grampa's poor broken back! I 'll remember that. You 'll git your pay!"

He pushed the coal-hod before him, and was creeping along on the ground to get a stray lump which had escaped his eye before, when he perceived Martin standing before him, with Alice.

"Here, little girl!" he cried, in a querulous, shrill voice, "why can't ye pick up that lump for a poor broken-backed old man? Don't ye see it, hey?"

"The child is blind," said Martin, moving away, with feelings of pity and disgust.

"Be you the man wants to see Simeon?" returned the broken-backed grandfather.

Martin did not at the moment feel a very strong desire to see Simeon, being quite satisfied with what he had seen of Simeon's family. But it was no time for the indulgence of caprices. He therefore hastened to state that he was recommended to the house by Mr. Wormlett's sister, Mrs. Dabney; and that he was desirous of securing lodgings for himself and companion, and another friend he was going to bring, as soon as possible. At that the old man, still on his hands and knees, began to nod, and shake, and grin over the hod, in a frightful manner.

"So Lyddy sent you, did she, hey?" he chattered, under the shadow of his dilapidated hat, with only his shrivelled side-face touched by the slanting rays of the street-lamp. "Lyddy 's my

darter, ye know. And how does Lyddy git along? Pooty forehanded, hey? She was allers a prudent gal, Lyddy was, — had a right-down old-fashioned bringing-up. Children don't often have such bringing-up, now-a-days; not such as Lyddy had; we took pains with Lyddy; train up a child in the way he should go, that 's my way, and that 's what I did by Lyddy, and all my children. Good manager, an't she, hey?"

Martin answered that, having spent a summer in her household, he could bear witness to that fact; adding, with a smile, as he saw her again before him, that she had a decided genius for saving.

"He, he, he!" tittered the old man, getting up on his knees, rubbing his blackened skinny hands over the hod, and going again with the palsy; "that 's Lyddy! that 's my darter! Does she keep more 'n one cow? Does she sell any butter? Is that boy of her'n good to work, hey?"

Martin promised to enlighten the old man on all such points in Mrs. Dabney's domestic economy at some future time. But at the moment he was in great haste. He wished to see the little girl in safe quarters, and go for her father without delay.

"We 'll go in, then, and talk it over 'bout Lyddy some other time, hey?" returned the shaking grandfather. "But you would n't mind picking up that bit of coal fust, would ye, and saving me the trouble, with my lame knees, and poor old broken back?"

To advance matters, Martin tossed the bit — which was indeed a bit, being no larger than a walnut — into the hod, and offered to help the old man to his feet. But he was not yet quite willing to leave the side-walk. He could see some fine pieces of coal in cracks between the bricks, and did not at all like the idea of those ragged children, with poverty-stricken faces and empty baskets,

coming back and picking them out, after he was gone. He made an effort to get at them with his thin fingers, which he wedged down between the bricks with painful perseverance, but with no success; then tore off splints from the broom to be used for the purpose, at the same time telling young Sim to find him a pointed stick, which would be just the thing. At length, after tearing his fingers and bruising his knuckles a good deal in the operation, he gathered up the broken splints with what bits of coal he had obtained, put them carefully in the hod, and, with Martin's assistance, got upon his feet. Meanwhile Simeon stood by, jerking his head, screwing his under jaw round, and grinning, with his tongue out, and teased the old man to give him a cent to take the job off his hands, and finish up. Irritated by this tantalizing conduct, his grandfather made another spiteful clutch at him as soon as he stood firmly on his legs, — if such a palsied, bent and meagre frame could be said to stand firmly on anything; but Sim was again too quick for him, and the claw-like fingers grasped empty air. Thereupon grandfather and grandson began to chatter and gibber at each other, and skirmish on and off the steps; but finally, the old man, completely disconcerted and foiled, retreated into the house with his hod, sadly harassed in his rear by his light and agile antagonist.

Shrinking from the slightest contact with such uncongenial spirits, Alice followed, holding fast with trembling hand to the arm which guided her, and shuddering instinctively as she went up the steps into the house.

V.

HOW ALICE WAS ENTERTAINED.

AFTER what he had seen of the family, Martin was agreeably surprised on entering Mrs. Wormlett's parlor. A small wood-fire in the grate, and a common oil-lamp on the side-table, shed a faint, yellow light upon the scene. A sofa and a number of cane-bottom chairs made up the furniture of the room. The walls, covered with a coarse kind of paper, were otherwise quite naked and unadorned, except that over the mantelpiece hung a painting, evidently designed as a family-portrait. The likeness was of a man who, if the artist did him anything like justice, must have had an exceedingly florid countenance, wild eyes, a pleasantly savage grin, a rigid neck, and hair that stood up like bristles all over his head.

In one end of the parlor were half-closed folding-doors, through which could be seen a number of persons of both sexes eating dipped-toast and swallowing steaming cups of tea. To these the old man advanced, and, beckoning to a pale woman by the table, called to her in a sharp whisper to come out. Thereupon the pale woman gave something into the hands of a short, stout

girl, whose business seemed to be a perpetual trotting to and fro with cups and saucers, glided through the folding-doors, closing them after her, and stood before Martin and his companion.

"Here 's a man ma to see pa from An't Lyddy," chattered Sim. "Gi' me fo'pence for showing him where we live," — shuffling around against his mother, jerking his head, and rubbing his jacket with the backs of his hands. — "I 'm going to keep store when I 'm ten years old," he added, immediately, "and sell things for money, pa says I may."

"You 're going to board with us a spell, hey?" chimed in the old man, warming his lean calves by the fire. "Lyddy recommended him, Dolly. He 'll be a good boarder, I know, if Lyddy sent him. Lyddy had a good bringing-up, she had; she knows who to recommend, Lyddy does; I took pains with Lyddy when she was a gal. Train up a child in the way he should go, — that 's my doctrine; I 've proved it with Lyddy."

Tittering childishly, and crouching down before the grate, the old man drew a chair under him, and rubbed his stiff and blackened hands over the meagre blaze. Martin then hastened to give a partial statement of the circumstances under which he had come to the house, for Mrs. Wormlett's satisfaction.

"I don't know but we could take you, if you an't partic'lar about your room," that lady began, in a cold, disagreeable tone.

"I can put up with anything," interrupted Martin. "For the present I only wish to know if you can keep us to-night, and also find some place for this girl's father to sleep. Fix your own terms; I 'll be responsible for everything."

"I don't see what I can do with the girl, any way in the world," replied Mrs. Wormlett, with a forbidding glance at the child's poor apparel. "And, as for her father, I could n't think

of giving any encouragement for him, without consulting Mr. Wormlett. Will you sit down and wait till he comes in?"

Martin answered impetuously that it was no time to wait for anybody. Something must be done at once; and, if Mrs. Wormlett would promise so much as supper and shelter for the child, he would be satisfied. Alice stood by, with her little hands clasped, and tears running down her face. Mrs. Wormlett's features gradually softened as she looked at her, and when she spoke again her voice was somewhat changed from the harsh tones in which she had first addressed the strangers.

"Well, I will try to find a place for the little girl; she shall have some supper, at any rate. I don't know what Mr. Wormlett will say —"

"Yes, you do, too!" squeaked the old man, turning half round and showing his weazen face. "You know, as well as I do; this young chap 'll pay; Lyddy recommended him, and Simeon knows Lyddy, his own sister, as well as I do; and what would he object, if he 's sure of his money, — hey?"

Mrs. Wormlett gave the old man a threatening look, which made young Simeon curb his chin, and writhe, and utter a low, mocking whinney, for his grandfather's gratification.

"Come to the fire, child, and warm you," said Mrs. Wormlett, leading Alice forward. "Bring the stool, Simeon. Come, old man, how long are you going to cover up the grate in this way? You 'd better go; the boarders will be in soon."

She took a stick of wood from the corner of the hearth, and laid it on the fire. But the old man snatched it off immediately, and hid it behind his chair.

"It 's a sin, it 's a sin and a shame, it 's contrary to Scriptur', to waste your substance in that way," he muttered, in a voice of

harsh treble. "There 's fire enough; the room 's warm. 'T an't winter yet, is it, — hey?"

He crouched still closer, and held his fleshless fingers over the flame, gibbering incoherently. But he had reason to regret his interference in Mrs. Wormlett's affairs. She seized upon the stick he had captured, returned it spitefully to the grate, and forthwith drove him from the parlor. Having pushed him into the hall and shut the door, she apologized to Martin for the scene.

"He 's in his second childhood," said she "and we never suffer him to be around where the boarders are. He knows he han't no business here at this time in the evening. Simeon, where 's that stool?"

With innumerable odd jerks and twists of his head and shoulders, the boy was kicking the article in question across the faded carpet. His mother seized it impatiently, pushed him away, and made Alice sit down by the fire.

"Are these your best clothes, child?" she asked. taking off her hood and shawl.

"Not quite," answered the blind girl, meekly, trying to repress the tears which ran down her pale cheeks. "Father has my best things in his pack. I thought these would do to travel in."

"You have got beautiful hair," observed Mrs. Wormlett, softening more and more. "Are your feet warm?"

Alice put out her poor little shoes before the grate, and said they would be soon. Martin's heart warmed and glowed within him. He could have embraced the landlady for the good feeling she had so unexpectedly shown. But he contented himself with thanking her, and assuring her that anything she could do for the comfort of the child he would remember with as much gratitude

as if it were done for himself. Had he said *with more*, he would better have expressed the true feeling of his heart.

Mr. Wormlett had not yet arrived; but Martin could not wait longer for anything, having seen Alice provided for so comfortably. Hungry, fatigued and bewildered, as he was, he set out at once to go for Caleb Thorne.

"I 'll be back soon, and bring your father, Alice," he cried cheerily, bending over the blind girl as she sat by the fire. "Be patient, keep a good heart, and try to eat some supper."

The next moment he was gone; and Alice, as was her wont when deep feelings came over her, sat perfectly still and silent for some minutes, moving only when she drew in a long breath. Away down in the depths of her pure and gentle heart, she was thanking God for her new friend, and praying for that friend in the same prayer her soul breathed for her father.

She was aroused by voices in the parlor. The boarders had come in from the dining-room, and quite a variety of tones fell upon the blind girl's sensitive ear. She heard whispered remarks, which were not intended to be overheard by her. One — a female whisper — said it was a fine parlor-ornament Mrs. Wormlett had set upon a stool in the corner; another — a man's low growl — remarked that the house was getting rather too full for him, and he was afraid he would be obliged to leave; a third asked Miss Tomes, sarcastically, if her country cousin had not come to town quite unexpectedly; and many similar observations followed, of which the poor child felt that she was the subject. There was a good deal of tittering, too, excited — she knew very well — by her torn dress and worn-out little shoes. Her heart was deeply grieved, but she tried not to think of herself, or care for what she heard. She fixed her mind on her good, kind friend,

as she called him in her heart, and on her lost, unhappy father; yet she wept bitterly, and tried in vain to press back her tears with her hands.

At length the whisper, "She is blind," ran round the room. "Poor little girl!" said one, in a voice of such true pity that Alice felt a warm ray of comfort fall upon her heart. Another began to question her, not very delicately, yet with a genuine interest, which even less sensitive ears than the child's would have recognized in her tones. She answered simply and truthfully; and soon she was conscious of a group gathered around her, listening attentively to her replies. She discerned a good deal of curiosity in the minds of those present, but she felt much sympathetic feeling, too, flowing out to her from them. She was also the object of many little acts of kindness, for which she felt deeply grateful. One of the females brought a bowl of water for her to wash in, another procured a towel, and a third combed her hair. In the midst of these operations, Mrs. Wormlett appeared.

"Hurry, girls," said she; "for I expect the child is hungry. Her supper is all ready. Are you warm, child?"

Alice said yes, she thanked her; but, she added with feeling, she would rather not eat anything until her father came.

"Nonsense!" cried Mrs. Wormlett, in her habitually harsh voice, but not unkindly. "You must n't be notional. Come, your supper is ready, and you 'd better eat it. Fix her up, girls, and let her come along."

Alice would have made almost any sacrifice rather than displease those who were so kind to her. She therefore abandoned the dear thought of waiting for Martin and her father, and went as cheerfully as she could to eat her supper. Two or three of the

girls waited on her; they seemed to take pains to place before her such little morsels as would tempt her appetite; and she certainly enjoyed their attentions, if not the supper. She was a good deal worried, however, by young Simeon, who sat opposite. He drummed with his knife-handle, kicked the table-leg, and asked her, every now and then, "Where did she come from, knock a nigger down," in a mumbling voice, which struggled with mouthfuls of bread and butter.

The supper was finished; still Martin was absent; and Alice became more and more anxious about her father. To add to her distress, Mrs. Wormlett, who never indulged people in being notional, thought she ought to be put to bed. The child burst into tears, and pleaded for the privilege of waiting a little longer, that she might see her father.

"Nonsense!" said Mrs. Wormlett. "It 'll do you a good deal more good to go to bed and go to sleep. Besides, you 'll be a little in the way here, I 'm afraid."

"Then I will go," replied Alice, quickly. "But, if I am awake when they come, will you tell them to go in and say good-night to me?"

"La, yes, if you want 'em to," said Mrs. Wormlett, softening again in a very slight degree.

Miss Tomes, and a girl they called Lize, volunteered to put Alice to bed, and led her off up several flights of stairs. She never knew how tired she was until she came to make that tedious ascent. She could scarcely lift one foot above the other, after the first flight was passed; but she did not murmur, and, without uttering a complaint, she must have sunk heavily upon the hands that guided her on either side, and slid down fainting on the floor, had not the kind Miss Tomes perceived how weary she was, and

lifted her in her arms. So Alice was carried to the attic, and put to bed.

"You will be sure," she said, with trembling earnestness, as her two friends were taking leave of her, with many good wishes for her night's rest — "you will be sure and tell them to come in, for I shall not be asleep. I shall not sleep until they come. You *will* have them come in and see me, won't you?"

"Yes, dear," replied Miss Tomes. "I'll look out for that; but you'd better go to sleep first, if you can. I'll wake you up, so that you can see them."

Alice must have looked very sweet, as with a grateful smile she thanked Miss Tomes again, and, pressing the pillow with her sad, pale cheek, crossed her little hands upon her breast; for Miss Tomes bent over and kissed her, and whispered, "What a darling she is!" to her companion, who also embraced her with a kind good-night.

"Let me know as soon as they come, if you please," cried the gentle voice of Alice, as the girls were going away.

"Yes, dear," said Miss Tomes. "Now lie still and go to sleep."

Alice lay still indeed, almost breathlessly still; but sleep was wide from her pillow. In the silence of the attic her soul wept for her unhappy father, whom she loved so tenderly and truly, and never thought to blame. Thinking of his fatal passion as a misfortune, and never as a crime, she prayed again, as she had so often prayed before, that God would give him strength to triumph over that one fiend of appetite, which had laid its finger on him in his cradle, clasped his hand with a Judas kiss in his youth, and grappled him fiercely in its embrace in after years. "O, Father in heaven!" prayed her lonely, earnest, bleeding heart; "save him

from this pit. Let your holy angels be around him, and guard him, and guide his feet, as he has guided mine; for he cannot help himself sometimes; he is blind too. O, dear Father, let me die some night, and be put away in the ground, if I am in the way of any good which can be done to him; or make me somehow useful to him, if I stay here on earth!" Then she prayed for Martin again; for it made her very happy to pray for him in the prayer she offered up for her parent. But not for any selfish blessing did she ask. All she wanted for herself was the power of doing good, of doing some little good; blind, helpless child of sorrow, as she was.

While she prayed, a picture was presented to her mind, blending so perfectly and purely with the prayer, that it seemed a part of it. She saw a mountain stretching far up and away in dreamy distance, its soft blue summit buried in snowy clouds. On its side fell floods of morning sunshine, but a swamp in the vale below cast a deep shadow on the foot of the slope. Curling mists crept up out of the darkness, blushed and brightened, then faded in the sun. Upward too, in the shadow, with slow and painful steps, but with hopeful eyes, fixed ever on the sunrise glory above, toiled the figure of a youth. The sharp rocks cut his feet and tore his hands; thorns pierced his flesh, and often, as he reached up for support, large stones came tumbling down, bruising him as they fell. Yet he generously took by the hand other pilgrims, who had abandoned the ascent in despair, to aid and cheer them on. At one time he seemed to be leading a child; but a brighter hand than his reached down from behind a silvery veil, and taking hers, with a cheering, heavenly touch, drew her gently upward. Assisted thus, her light feet overstepped

the rugged spots, and guided the youth by the best and shortest paths.

As the mind of Alice followed the picture, she perceived that a crucifix, which she had scarce observed at first, it was so dim and small, increased in size and distinctness as it rested on the shoulder of the youth; and at length she saw him climbing under the burden of a heavy cross, which bore him down, extorting groans of anguish from his soul, until he sank powerless, with his despairing face pressed hard upon the rock. He had almost reached the sunshine; bright rays, indeed, fell golden on the cross, and formed a halo just above his head; but his form was still in the shadow and the mist. The child, who now stood before him in the full glory of the sun, strove in vain to help him; but the prayer she uttered was heard as a cry for help; and a bright creature, with whom the youth had exchanged some cheering words upon the way, flew to his side, and raised his head, and lifted up the cross. Then, in his glorified face, Alice recognized the features she had imagined as those of her new friend, and, with a start, she saw that the child who had attended him was blind. After that the scene changed suddenly. Again she saw the shadow and the mist. On a black and jagged ledge knelt the figure of a man, beating his breast and gnashing his teeth in despair. She beheld in him a pilgrim, whom the youth had made a vain effort to save, as he was on the point of falling from a cliff. Alice suppressed a cry. The pilgrim was her father. But an angel, stooping in the air above him, smiled serenely, and said, "Fear not!" pointing upward with her radiant hand. The child began to weep quietly and softly, for the angel was her mother.

What the picture meant — if there was any meaning in it —

she did not know, she tried in vain to guess. She lay thinking about it, when she heard footsteps on the stairs. Immediately the dream was forgotten, and her heart commenced beating with anxious throbs.

"Are you awake, dear?" whispered Miss Tomes.

"Have they come?" asked Alice, starting up in bed.

"There, there! lie down; don't be frightened," replied Miss Tomes. "The young man has come back —"

"Alone!" said Alice, sinking upon her pillow, with a plaintive moan. "My father! — my poor father! I knew how it would be!"

A vivid remembrance of her angel mother, her heavenly smile, her words of cheer, and the radiant hand pointing upward, passed through her mind, like a sudden flash of light, and filled her with peace and trust.

"Alice," murmured a softened, manly voice. She knew it, for it was a voice she had learned to love, as flowers love sunshine and dew. At the same time a gentle hand pressed together her two hands as they lay folded on her bosom, and she felt a warm breath on her cheek.

"Where is he, — my father? Where is he?" came faintly from her lips.

Martin made an effort to answer cheerfully, but his voice failed him, and Alice felt tears upon her face that were not her own. Another face bowed upon her pillow; a cheek touched hers with a pressure that had sympathy and loving kindness in it; and there was a sound of smothered sobs close beside her ear.

"Don't cry! O, don't cry!" exclaimed the child, throwing her arm impulsively around the young man's neck. "I can't bear to have you. O dear, don't, if you please!"

He folded her in his arms, and held her to his heart; and for some minutes they wept together, — the strong, hopeful youth and the poor, blind orphan girl, — clasped in an embrace as pure as the breath of violets.

VI.

MR. TOPLINK AND FRIENDS.

AITING for Martin on the landing outside the door, Miss Tomes heard sounds of weeping. Then the low tones of the young man's voice succeeded, so full of love and sympathy that, although she could not distinguish a word that was spoken, she felt her heart swell and overflow in an unaccountable manner. It was just like that strange creature, Tomes, as Mr. Toplink would have observed, in his disparaging, good-natured way.

Martin came out of the chamber so softly that she did not suspect that any one saw her wipe away those tears, until the floor creaked at her side. She looked hastily out of her handkerchief, and saw the young man closing the door behind him with a careful hand. He had brought out Miss Tomes' chamber-lamp, and its light showed that his face was pale, and sorrowful, and wet. Both were taken a little by surprise; but Martin smiled faintly, and, giving the lamp to the boarder, thanked her fervently for her kindness and attention to the orphan.

"Is there anything else I can do for her to-night?" asked Miss Tomes, picking up the wick with a needle.

"She needs rest and sleep more than anything," replied Martin.

"It all seems very strange, somehow," suggested Miss Tomes, who, with all her good-nature, cherished a strongly-marked trait of curiosity in her disposition; "I never felt so much interest in a child in my life. She told me something of her history, but I did n't understand it very well. How could she get lost away from her father?"

Martin, always frank and sociable, gave a brief statement of the case, for her gratification.

"And when you went back, you could not find him?"

"The bar-tender did n't know what had become of the man. It was n't his business to take care of such people. He had done his best; he had told him to stay, but he had chosen to go. I asked him how long since he left. He did n't know; he had other things to think of. 'Did he drink any more liquor before he went?' I inquired. He did n't exactly remember, but he believed he did. He had paid for a glass, anyway, and he thought he gave it him. It was his business to sell liquor to any one who wanted it."

"Dreadful!" said Miss Tomes.

"Then I told him about this little girl," added Martin.

"That must have touched him!"

"He showed no signs of being touched. He said he could n't help it; that was n't his affair; and went on shaking up his juleps and making change for his customers, without the least concern."

"Do tell me if there are such people!" ejaculated Miss Tomes.

"Not many, I hope. Yet some one told me aside that the bar-tender was one of the best fellows in the world; he had proved him so; only he — the bar-tender — had seen too much of such

things to be disturbed by them. He had got used to 'em, and learned that the wisest course for him was to have as little to do with them as possible."

"That 's natural, I suppose," said Miss Tomes; "but how horrid!"

"Before I came away, I begged of him to detain the man if he made his appearance there again. 'All right,' said he, and that was all I could get out of him; so I left him mixing his drinks and joking with his customers."

During this conversation, Miss Tomes had led the way to a room under the attic, to which Martin had been directed by Mrs. Wormlett. Miss Tomes, who had volunteered to be his guide, now stood holding the door with one hand, and the light with the other, and harrying him with questions.

"If you will excuse me," he said, "I will make haste and prepare for supper."

"Certainly! What was I thinking of?" cried Miss Tomes, in a tone of self-reproach. "How inconsiderate I am! You must be so hungry and tired!"

Miss Tomes was neither young nor pretty, nor very well dressed; but there was so much goodness in her face, as she spoke, that Martin would have remembered the look with gratitude had he never seen her again. He thanked her and entered the room, while with a full heart she went tripping down stairs.

The appearance of the chamber was not inviting. It contained three flat, mean-looking beds wedged in together, two dilapidated wash-stands, with broken-nosed pitchers and cracked bowls, and a single lamp-stand, at which sat a very slim young gentleman, with a very long neck, and a sloping forehead and chin, engaged in writing by a sickly light.

"How do you do, sir?" said the slim gentleman, looking up with a friendly smile, and nodding. "Sit down, sir."

He stretched out his leg behind one of the beds, hooked a chair with the toe of his boot, drew it out, and shoved it towards Martin.

Glancing around the room, the young romancer felt quite disheartened. His first impulse was to throw himself upon one of the beds, and lie there until morning, without making speech with any one; but his kind and social nature overcame these gloomy feelings, and he returned the boarder's salutation politely.

"Which of these beds is mine, do you suppose?" he asked, looking as if he thought there was not much to choose between them.

"The one with the head-board and ragged pillow is unoccupied," replied the slim young gentleman, putting his pen behind his ear; "but, if you would prefer mine, I 'll exchange. This is mine with the bundles and so forth on it, which is your property, I presume. Take your choice."

Martin thanked the boarder, but, declining his gracious offer, threw himself down on the unoccupied bed with a suppressed groan.

"This is a rich boarding-house," observed the young gentleman, dipping his pen and putting it once more behind his ear. "You know Mr. Wormlett, I suppose?"

"I have not that honor," replied Martin.

"O! well, it an't no great loss," remarked the boarder, dipping his pen again, and holding it over the paper. "Well, yes, it is a loss, too. He 's a character, Mr. Wormlett is. You 'll be glad to know him. You saw the old man?"

"Yes, and the boy," said Martin.

"Then you 'll know the boy's father when you see him. The

three are just alike. They 're an odd family. You 'll laugh when you see the three together. Difference in years makes all the difference between 'em. Well, I would n't say a word against the family for the world; you 'll see for yourself. There are some things about 'em though, — ha, ha, ha!"

The young man choked with laughter, dipped his pen again and began to flourish over the paper, touching it only with his little finger, — looking all the time as if he could unfold as remarkable a tale as the ghost in Hamlet, but that he was forbid by the dictates of a nice sense of honor. Apparently much to his disappointment, Martin did not question him; and, after dipping his pen two or three times, still without writing a word, he resumed the conversation, by asking the new lodger if he saw the old woman.

"Do you mean Mrs. Wormlett?"

"Yes; I don't mean any one else. She 's a case. You did n't hear her say anything about Toplink, did you?"

"No, I did not. Who is Toplink?"

The young gentleman chuckled, as if he thought it a great joke, dipped his pen and put it over his ear, and finally leaned back in his chair for a hearty laugh.

"That 's me; my name 's Toplink," said he, throwing up his arms. "The old woman and me an't on very good terms. Well, yes, we be, too. That is, nobody 'd suspect we wan't. But we don't like each other any too well, that 's a fact. Well, I won't say anything to prejudice you. I would n't injure her for the world. You 'll see for yourself, though, and perhaps you 'll understand some things better by and by than you could now. Well, she 's a case; that 's all I got to say."

The slim gentleman chuckled, and, leaning his long neck over

the lamp-stand, dipped his pen three times, and made preparatory flourishes as before. As he was about to touch the paper, however, another fit of merriment seized him violently, and he burst into an abrupt "Ho, ho, ho!"

"You should have been here at dinner yesterday," said he, with tears in his eyes. "It was meat-pie day. This house is becoming justly celebrated for its meat-pies. It 's veal the day before, and tough steak for breakfast; then follows the meat-pie, sweeping together the scattered fragments into one sublime dish. But the meat-pie would be like half a pair of tongs without its bread-pudding accompaniment. We 'd as soon think of going to an old bachelor's wedding, where there was no bride, as of setting down to meat-pie without its royal consort, bread-pudding. It takes one to rally the routed roast veal and beef-steak forces, while the other brings up the rear with broken biscuits, forlorn crusts, and the like. The old grandfather follows us at every onset, like a vulture, but what escapes him comes to us the day after in the shape mentioned. — Pshaw! what am I saying? I hope you won't think I talk about folks; I never do — that is, to injure any one. — But, as I was going to tell you; it was meat-pie day yesterday, and Mrs. Wormlett gave me a piece which looked like a mangled toad-stool. Well, I lifted up the greasy crust, and began to work industriously; when suddenly I paused, dropped my knife and fork, took a longing, lingering look at the object before me, and heaved a sigh. 'What 's the matter?' says Mr. Flinks, who sets opposite me. 'Nothing,' says I, loud enough for all the table to hear, 'only I 'm a little affected,' says I, pulling out my handkerchief. 'Here 's an old friend,' says I, 'turned up quite unexpectedly. He was a hardened sinner when I knew him. I dealt with him faithfully when I had him on my plate at

breakfast, and I 'm grieved to see that baking has n't improved him.' You should have heard the laugh that followed ! "

Mr. Toplink exploded at the recollection. But all that was nothing to some things he could relate about that boarding-house, he said, recovering himself, if it were n't for talking about folks to their injury, which practice he heartily abhorred.

" I must tell you one thing, though," said he, in a mysterious whisper, laying down the pen. " It 's too good. You observed that old —— well, that young lady, to speak politely — with the curl ? "

" Do you mean Miss Tomes ? " asked Martin languidly.

" 'Sh ! Yes. She 's queer. You 've probably found that out. She 's a book-folder."

" Ah ! " articulated Martin. He brightened a little, thinking what a singular coincidence it would be if Miss Tomes should be employed to fold the Beggar of Bagdad.

" Yes," said Toplink. " Sleeps in the attic, and pays a dollar seventy-five for her board. She 's dyspeptic, and eats Graham bread. That 's what makes her curl so meagre, I tell folks. Well, I won't say nothing against Tomes, neither. What I was going to tell you : There 's a fellow," — Toplink lowered his voice again, — " sleeps in that there other bed, name of Leviston. He 's a case. Well, he an't much like me, if we do room together. He hates everybody, — even me, I sometimes think. He and Tomes used to snarl and snap at each other, like cats and dogs. But, before I go further, let me beg of you not to be prejudiced by anything I say. I 'm only going to state a little circumstance —— Yes, I should judge so. Fifty degrees above zero, and falling at that."

This singular turn in Mr. Toplink's remarks was occasioned by the entrance of Mr. Leviston himself.

"What should you say?" he added. "Shall we have rain in the morning?"

At the same time, Mr. Leviston's back being turned, he winked knowingly at Martin; then dipped his pen again and made a good many more imaginary flourishes, working his head in sympathy with his hand, screwing his mouth on one side and stretching his neck to the task, until his body formed a semicircle, and the horns of oiled hair above his temples seemed hooking at the paper. During this operation, Sim Wormlett entered the room, and, with several odd jerks of his head and shoulders, said that "If the new boarder—he did n't know his name—wanted any supper, he 'd better come down and eat it,—pa had come, and ma was waiting; he did n't care for anybody." Upon that, Martin got up, washed his hands and face in one of the cracked bowls, and combed his hair before a broken looking-glass which showed him two fragmentary heads, resembling his own, with faces a foot long, divided on the bridge of the nose.

Descending to the dining-room, he found Mr. Wormlett getting up from the table. As Toplink had predicted, he knew him at a glance. It was hard to say which was most like him, the grandfather or grandson. A slight resemblance between him and the family portrait, with wild eyes and standing hair, which hung over the mantelpiece in the parlor, was also observable; while something about the narrow forehead, and small, sharp gray eyes, reminded one of his sister, Mrs. Lydia Dabney. Yet there was an expression of importance in the manner in which he carried his head and neck, peculiar to himself. If the old man had ever had it, it had been shaken out of him long ago by the palsy; and young Sim's odd jerks and twitches, although often amazingly like it, needed the ripeness and experience of mature

years, to give him the air of obstinate self-conceit which characterized his parent.

"You come from Lyddy's, they tell me?" said Mr. Wormlett, setting his chair back from the table. "You are going to try your fortin' in Boston, I suppose?"

Martin said he had come to town to see what he could do. Mr. Wormlett sucked his teeth, nodded approvingly, and took his stand, with his hands behind him, directly opposite the new boarder.

"Boston is a good place to make money," said he, with a crafty smile, throwing his head to one side, in a self-complacent attitude. "Only put your mind to it and be shrewd, and you 'll do well. Must n't let other things interfere with business; if you do, you 'll find it don't pay. That 's what I tell Simeon," added Mr. Wormlett, placing his hand on the head of his hopeful son.

Young Sim jerked his shoulders, grinned, and looked more than ever like his father, at that moment.

"I 'm going to keep in the grocery when I 'm ten years old," said he, writhing and rubbing his jacket with the backs of his hands, "an't I, pa?"

"Yes, if you 're a good boy, and learn your 'rithm'tic, and save up your coppers. Form good habits while you 're young, my son. That 's the way to prepare yourself for usefulness hereafter."

Having given utterance to this fine moral precept, Mr. Wormlett inquired what business Martin thought of going into.

"I intend to publish a book," replied the young man, sugaring his tea.

"Is that a profitable business?" asked the other, doubtfully.

"I don't know," replied Martin, coloring. "I believe, however, that successful books pay their authors very well."

"You are the author of your book, then?" returned Mr. Wormlett. "Well, I hope you 'll make money on 't. If it 's a 'rithm'tic or reading-book, or some such thing, I should think it might do well. Other books, seems to me, an't of much account. What kind is yours?"

"It 's a Romance," replied Martin.

"A romance!" repeated Mr. Wormlett, with a leer. "Why, that 's a novil story, an't it?"

"It 's a work of fiction," Martin confessed, with some reluctance.

Mr. Wormlett jerked his head from one side to the other, with an air of superior wisdom, and regarded Martin for a moment in silence. He then expressed in general terms his disapproval of all such publications, which tended to dissipate the minds of young people, and give them a distaste for business. "But," said he, "there 's a good many folks read novils, or else there would n't be so many writ and printed. If people will buy 'em, you may as well write 'em and make money on 'em as anybody." Having expressed his sentiments on that point, Mr. Wormlett remarked that he would like to talk with his new boarder about Lyddy, some time, but that he was in a hurry just then; and withdrew, expressing a hope that he would be able to make out a supper.

As soon as he was gone, the shaking grandfather put his head into the room, and, observing that Martin had moved back from the table, entered and sat down at a dish of fragments which had been picked up after the boarders. Martin arose, having no desire to witness his meal. Immediately the old man darted at a crust he had left beside his plate, seized it, and began to gnaw it greedily with his two front teeth, mumbling and gibbering at the same

time about the "sights" required to feed the boarders, and the "heaps of money" people might lay up if they could live without eating.

Miss Tomes was waiting at the door to invite Martin into the parlor. But he was too anxious in mind, and too fatigued in body, to see society that evening. On going up to his room, he received a grave and earnest proposition from Mr. Toplink to "enjoy" the night with him and Leviston, in exploring the mysteries of Boston. Declining this kind invitation also, he retired to his bed, and dreamed that Mr. Toplink, who talked him to sleep, was a mighty publisher, who proposed to issue the Romance of Caleb Bag, as a geography, provided the author would kill Miss Tomes in the second book, and invent a milder fate for the hero than that of dragging his body through the streets of Bagdad at the tail of a fire-engine.

VII.

MR. WORMLETT'S NEW BOARDERS.

FULL of hope, the young romancer arose on the following morning, to commence the struggle for life in the great city. Boldly and resolutely he faced the obstacles which crowded his path. But courage brought not good fortune. Of Cheesy he could still learn nothing, and all his efforts to recover the lost Caleb proved fruitless. A stranger amid strange scenes, he seemed only to wander about in a maze of difficulties.

In all the busy city, so populous and wide, there dwelt not one upon whom Martin had any claim for counsel or assistance. But there, where he himself stood so much in need of friendly guidance and friendly cheer, he was left alone, with a poor, distressed, blind orphan girl, who, in her desolation, had only him to look to for protection.

Mr. Wormlett sagely counselled him to rid himself of the incumbrance of the child, without delay.

"I 've had experience you han't," observed that gentleman,

jerking his head to one side, folding his arms, and looking down on Martin from his grocery door with an expression of profound wisdom. "If a young man like you means to be anything in the world, he must look out for himself, and let alone folks that can't never be of no use to him. S'posing I 'd gone out of my way, from time to time, to pick up this one and that, — worthy people enough, perhaps, — that wanted help; d' ye think I 'd be where I am now?"

Martin, shaping his reply with reference to Mr. Wormlett's moral progress, said, with a bitter smile, "No! he thought not; he might have become a very different sort of a man."

"Very true," resumed Mr. Wormlett, with grim self-complacency. "That 's sound philosophy; that 's what I tell my son Simeon here." Simeon writhed and twisted, and looked over his shoulder at his father, with his old and cunning leer. — "That 's the true principle to live by, an't it, my son? To be sure 't is, Simeon. You 'll find that out, sooner or later, Mr. Merrivale. If you know better, and choose to support the girl till her father turns up, you can try it; it 'll be a lesson; I 've no objection; it 's your affair, not mine. You can pay her board, if that 's going to be such a great satisfaction to you, certainly."

Mr. Wormlett appeared to consider the last remark a good joke. He chuckled over it, and curbed his chin, stiffening up his hair with his fingers, and leering knowingly at Martin. Young Simeon, who stood torturing his wiry body into odd shapes against the wall, chuckled, curbed himself, and brushed up his fore-top in precisely the same way.

"I make it a p'int never to interfere in what don't concern me," pursued the father, putting on his hat, and jerking his head to one side. "It don't pay, I find. I only give you my advice,

jest as I 'd advise a boy of my own, — jest as I advise Simeon here, every day of his life. I lay down principles to him. I says, Simeon, my son, I says, the great law of natur' is, every living creatur' must look out for themselves. You must learn to look out for yourself, now you 're young. I says, If you don't, I says, nobody 'll look out for ye, and it an't right they should. Every one has enough to do to look out for themselves; that 's accordin' to the universal law of natur'. An't that what I tell ye, Simeon?"

The boy said yes, grinning, with his chin down and his tongue out, and twisting his neck as if he meant to unscrew it from his shoulders.

"Them 's principles," continued Mr. Wormlett, dogmatically. "When a child once gits 'em grafted into his natur', he 'll know the valley on 'em, for they come into practice every day of your life. I says, Simeon, my son, I says, honesty is the best policy, — a man don't make nothing by being dishonest; he 's always sure to be found out, some day or 'nother. Be honest, I says, look out for yourself, keep a clear conscience and save up your coppers, and you 're in the right way to become a respectable and useful member of society."

"Yes, yes," squeaked the shaking grandfather, tottering to the door with a handful of rags he had just fished out of the gutter. "That 's true, Simeon; that 's the way to do; that 's the way I brought up my children. I believe in that; train up a child in the way he should go, that 's my motto. Now, run and pick up that bit of shingle on the crossing, 'fore somebody else gits it. It 's a pity to have such things wasted; they 're good as charcoal to kindle with, and charcoal 's dre'ful high; high 's I ever knowed it to be; cruelly high, this season."

"Pick it up yourself," said the boy, shuffling round his father. "I got to go to school, han't I, pa?"

"Yes, my son; go, and be a good boy, and learn your 'rithm'tic," replied Mr. Wormlett, patting his head. "Remember what I told you about the great law of natur'; be honest, take care of yourself, and don't play marbles, nor pitch cents, nor anything that leads to gambling; mind that, my son."

"Where 'd he git them flowers?" asked Sim, pointing to a small nosegay Martin was carrying to Alice.

"That an't your business, Simeon," replied his father. "Let the flowers be. What have you got to do with flowers, my son? Leave all such things alone, that 's the best way; it don't pay to have anything to do with 'em, that 's what I always tell ye, my son. Now run to school, and fill your little head with useful knowledge."

The boy sidled out of the door, jerking and twisting as usual, grinned over his shoulder at his father, and shuffled between Martin and the old man, putting out his tongue, and uttering a mocking whinney at the latter as he passed.

"None of that, my son," said Mr. Wormlett, gravely. "Be respectful to age. Come," he added, impatiently, turning to the old man, after the boy was gone, "this is no place for you. I can't have you round here."

"I 'm allers in the way," complained the old man, in a shrill voice, shaking frightfully, — "allers in the way. I 'm a burden to my own children, 't I 've worked and slaved for all my days. I 'm treated like a dog by 'em; that 's their gratitude, — that 's what I git for all my toil and trouble; that 's the way I 'm repaid for givin' 'em good instructions in their youth. But I won't complain. I shan't be in anybody's way much longer;

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they 'll have me in my grave soon enough; they 'll give me the last push, and done with the poor old man."

"That will do," exclaimed Mr. Wormlett, harshly. "I won't have that. 'T an't your place to be hanging around here, when there 's customers to tend to, — I 've told you that before."

"Yes, yes; I 'll go," cried the old man; "grampa an't nothing nor nobody; nothing but a slave; nothing but a drudge; he an't worth minding; kick him out of the way, and good enough for him. Children don't turn out as they used to, though. There 's black ingratitude at work somewhere — I won't say where. 'T wan't so in my day; children was dutiful then, as I remember; parents was cared for and respected; but times changes, and sich things go out of fashion."

So the old man tottered away, shaking and gibbering till he was out of sight. Mr. Wormlett thereupon, resuming his oracular manner, spoke again of blind Alice, uttering many profound moral precepts in support of his previous decision; until Martin, who, in his extremity, had come to him for counsel, felt sick at heart, and despised himself for having listened to that gentleman's practical advice for a moment.

Yet Mr. Wormlett's conversation proved beneficial to Martin. It had a stimulating effect upon him. It gave him confidence in his own impulses; it filled him with an ennobling sense of his own manhood and strength. Until then it had seemed to him that any one else would have done a great deal more for Alice than he could do; but now, thrown entirely upon his own resources, he resolved to follow faithfully the dictates of his own heart, and do his best, leaving the rest to Providence.

He returned to the boarding-house, and went up into the little attic room, where Alice lay upon her poor bed, waiting for him.

She knew his step, and her sorrowful face lighted up in an instant.

"I have brought you a little present," said he, laying the nosegay on her pale cheek. "I remembered that you were fond of flowers."

He might have added that he had paid out the last of his little stock of change to bring her those dainties, thinking only of the pleasure they would afford her. But, had they cost him a hundred times the amount they did, he would have been more than rewarded in witnessing her gratification. She kissed them with exquisite tenderness, breathed their fragrant breath, held them to her bosom, and felt them fondly and lovingly with her sensitive fingers.

"The dear, sweet creatures!" she murmured; "I am so glad to have them! They will be company for me when you are away."

To her they seemed to possess life and love. They had souls; she recognized in them a language and a sympathy; their odors were sweet thoughts stealing into her heart from the great heart of Nature.

Still she did not forget her father, nor cease to grieve for him. But a voice within kept whispering, "Be calm, O child; fear not; God will watch over the unfortunate one;" and she could not but put faith in the assurance. So her deep night of trouble was not without its stars, which drew the eyes of her soul up to heaven. Martin was rejoiced to find that she listened with so much gentle trust to the words of consolation with which he accompanied the story of his fruitless search. He derived new strength and fresh resolution from her, and went out hopefully again into the city, leaving her with her little company of flowers.

That forenoon the Beggar of Bagdad was introduced to an eminent publisher. With a palpitating heart, the ambitious author opened his immortal manuscript on the desk of the mighty man of books. He felt that it was the great moment of his life; the ship of fame was launched upon the wide ocean of his future, to invite its favoring gales, and to brave its storms; and glowing, flushed, exalted with the inspiration of hope, he made a rather incoherent address, in which the idea conveyed was, that he had chosen the said bookseller, before all others, to honor and enrich his house with the publication of the great Romance.

The bookseller was a strange man. Martin had expected to see him manifest surprise, get up and shake his hand with hearty congratulation. He did nothing of the kind. He looked up pleasantly enough, and regarded his ambitious visitor with a smile, but nothing more. He did not even invite him to sit down. He waited for Martin to finish his address, then replied, politely, very much as any other business man would have done to a gentleman consulting him on an ordinary matter of business —

"If you will be so good, sir, as to leave the manuscript, it shall be read without delay."

"When can I know your decision?" Martin asked, in a voice slightly tremulous with excitement.

"Not before the middle of next week, — perhaps on Wednesday," coolly answered the bookseller.

He bowed, and resumed his writing. A minute later, Martin fo ....self in the street. His face was flushed, a nervous tremor was in his hands, and he was walking very fast. He could scarcely realize what he had done, but he seemed to have stood, that morning, face to face with Destiny.

The town was full of interest to Martin. There were many

places he had long desired to visit; but he went not near them then. And, although novel scenes on every side attracted his eye, he did not linger in the noisy streets.

He returned to Alice; and, not long after, the two might have been seen walking slowly, hand in hand, up towards the Common. It was a warm October day, and the west wind swept gently along the broad and shaded paths, rustling the fallen leaves, and blowing in the curls of Alice.

"Is not the day very beautiful?" asked the child.

"It is very beautiful and sweet," replied Martin. "Do you enjoy the walk?"

"O, so much! How good it was in you to bring me here! Does the sun shine very bright to-day?"

"Very bright, dear child. But its splendor is softened by a warm haze. The bars of sunlight which slope down through the arched boughs above us are golden-blue."

"But the leaves, they are falling, are n't they? I hear a fluttering on the ground," said Alice, in a plaintive tone. "I am always sad when the leaves come raining down in the autumn-time, for it was in the autumn that my mother died."

"The leaves are falling, Alice, but there are many still upon the trees," replied her companion. "They flash and flare on every bough, as the sun shines upon them, and quiver as if with pleasure, as the wind kisses them. They are of beautiful tints and hues — russet, orange, bright gold and flaming scarlet. They sift the rays which rest with such beauty upon your brow and hair."

"Are we out of the city? Can you see where the blue sky shuts down?"

"We are in a magnificent rolling park, laid out in avenues and paths, with long, double rows of such trees as I have described,

running in almost every direction. The city is on three sides; but on the west there is a river that gleams like silver. Beyond that are blue hills, all asleep under the hazy sky. On the hills there are woods and houses, and on the river a slow-moving sail. I wish you could see all this, my dear child."

"O, but I see!" exclaimed Alice. "I see it all as you describe it. I never saw more plainly with my eyes. I see, as I saw you in my dream last night, going up the mountain with a cross, — only that scene was more beautiful than this."

"You saw me with a cross?" cried Martin, quickly, while a shadow of thought swept out the cheerful sunshine of his face.

Alice related the vision she had seen; and the young man listened, all absorbed, gazing upon her sad, sweet face as she spoke. And when she had ceased, he gazed upon her still, walking on in silence, impressed with such subdued and pensive awe as we sometimes feel in dreams, when the loved one at our side appears radiant with celestial light, and entertains us with angelic speech.

And so, with his intent eyes upon the child, he passed with her so near the form of a man outstretched in sleep upon the grass,— so near, yet saw him not, — that she, a little while thereafter, said, with thoughtful sadness —

"I feel as if I had been walking by the bed of my father."

After resting some time upon a bench in a shaded spot, they returned to the boarding-house. The one-o'clock bells were ringing as they entered the door, and the boarders were coming in to dinner. The scene possessed so many disagreeable features to the fastidious Martin, that he would have turned away, and wandered about the city until night, had it not been for Alice. The Common, with its fine slopes, its regal trees, and soft winds blowing over all, had not prepared him to appreciate the practical

comforts of Mr. Wormlett's house. The hall was gloomy, and full of the rank odors of an impure and ill-ventilated kitchen. The walls were dingy, the oil-cloth carpet had long since been bereft of all its original colors, and the worn-out door-mat appeared to be nothing more than a thin and slightly concave clod of stiff mud. Moreover, democratic as he was in his feelings, Martin felt a repugnance to sitting down at the dinner-table with the persons who composed Mr. Wormlett's family.

He went up into his room with Alice, and kept her company until the rush for dinner was over, and young Sim appeared to call them for the second table.

"It 's Saturday afternoon, school don't keep, and I 'm going to be in the grocery, pa says I may," rattled forth that young gentleman, with his cunning old grin, as he hobbled down the stairs. "The boys wanted me to go and play ball, but pa said he 'd gi' me a cent not to, — he wants me to learn business."

"There 's wisdom for ye, Mr. Merrivale," observed Mr. Wormlett, pausing in the hall, as he was on his way to the dining-room. "Keep on this way, my son, and there 's no knowing what you 'll come to, one of these days. Hey, Mr. Merrivale?"

Holding his head stiffly on one side, he regarded Martin with a self-complacent smirk. Thus appealed to, the young man dryly observed that, if young Simeon diligently pursued the course he had begun, there was every reason to believe he would make a man very much like his father.

"There 's encouragement for you, my son!" exclaimed Mr. Wormlett, patting the boy's head. "What would you give to be a man like your father?" Simeon grinned, and twisted, and rubbed his jacket with the backs of his hands, by way of reply. "Well, keep on, as Mr. Merrivale says; save up your coppers, cram that

little head o' your'n with useful knowledge, be honest, and act from principle at all times, and there is no knowing but you may make a wiser man even than your father. Think of that, Simeon, my son, — only think of that."

Martin had the pleasure of dining with Mr. Wormlett. That gentleman was in his best humor. He seemed determined to impress the new boarder with the immense power of mind which he could bring to bear upon all subjects of practical importance. He dealt largely in principles, appealing now and then to Simeon his son, to remember the sentiments he laid down, as he would treasure up so much gold. In short, Mr. Wormlett was inclined to be exceedingly condescending and companionable with his guest, until he made a discovery which quite altered his opinion of his claims to respectability.

When the good Miss Tomes, perceiving that Alice could eat nothing, had taken her into the parlor, and Martin was left alone with the Wormletts, the head of that thriving family, coming down from the sphere of abstract principles to the plane of business, observed that the first rule of his boarding-house was that every new boarder should be required to pay one week's board in advance.

"Not that I've any doubts of you," he added, as Martin changed color. "If Lyddy sent ye here, of course you 're good. I don't doubt that. But there 's so many people comes here and tries to impose upon us, that we must have some rule to go by. Always go by rule; that 's my doctrine. An't that what I learn you, Simeon? Always have a rule, and go by it. Your board, Mr. Merrivale, will be three dollars a week, and the girl's will be a dollar and a half."

How it was done, Martin never knew; but he had stammered forth a confession of his poverty, requesting to be waited upon

until he could get returns from his Romance; and Mr. Wormlett, having arisen from his seat, stood before him, grim and solemn, with a withering expression of suspicion and severity on his face.

"Do you say Lyddy sent you here?" he asked, sternly, with a sudden jerk of his head.

Martin reäffirmed the fact, and alluded to the lost letter.

"I 'd like to see that letter. If Lyddy give you a letter for me, I 'd like to see it. I won't call you an impostor; but I must say I did n't think you 'd attempt to shirk your board in this way; and, as for the story of the letter, I can't understand it, that 's all. You 're in a brave condition, it seems, to take the responsibility of supporting a child you don't know nothing about, — buying paltry flowers for her, too! I don't mean to hurt nobody's feelings," continued Mr. Wormlett, grimly; "but I 'm a practical man myself, a man of principle, and I 'm in the habit of judging the world by a high standard of moral integrity."

"You are perfectly right," replied Martin, in a low tone, and with compressed lips. His face flushed crimson, then turned to an almost deadly whiteness, as he got up from the table. "Excuse me until evening, and I will endeavor to satisfy you."

Mr. Wormlett repeated what he had said about being a man of principle, in a manner which indicated the highest satisfaction with himself, and, adding that he trusted Mr. Merrivale would prove entirely worthy of his confidence, proceeded to his place of business, leading his son Simeon by the hand, and laying down "principles" to him by the way.

Burning with mortification and shame, Martin went out, resolved to perform almost any desperate act, rather than meet his landlord in the evening without being able to place in his hand every penny he demanded as his due.

VIII.

THE ADVENTURES OF CHEESY.

CHEERING, shouting and tugging at the rope, in the flying crowd of men and boys, whose enthusiasm he had imbibed, Cheesy ran with the engine to the fire. He seemed like one upon whose exertions the safety of the town depended. For the first time in his life, that evening, the heroic element shone through his character, like a lamp, newly lighted, through a transparent sign. It transfigured his face. It was visible in his tight fustians straddling over the pavement. It seemed bursting out of every rent, and streaming from his hair. It twinkled in his shirt-sleeves. It was the lightning of which his voice was the thunder. In short, Cheesy was HIMSELF! Those noble feelings, which Mrs. Dabney's base treatment had so long suppressed, which the daring feats of circus-riders and occasional dog-fights in the village had fitfully aroused, and which had been so quick to recognize the merits of Martin's great Romance, now burst forth like the conflagration he was rushing to put out.

At length, the engine to which he had joined himself drove into a dense and confused mass of people. Long lines of vehicles were stopped on either side, and the alarm that day seemed to be the

exciting cause of many profound drivers' oaths. Firemen shouted and hurried hither and thither, and ran out long hose-pipes and manned the brakes. The sea of spectators heaved and swayed to and fro, as light hose-carriages dashed through them. The great source and centre of all this excitement appearing to be in a narrow alley, Cheesy scrambled forward, until he could look in, and see the hose-pipes lying along the ground, like huge black snakes. About that time, a hook-and-ladder company arrived, and he was greatly excited on seeing them make a long ladder out of two short ones, and raise it to the roof of a tall brick building at the end of the alley. Two firemen mounted at once, the first with a hatchet, the second with a hose-pipe. Having got upon the eaves and chopped open a garret-window, out of which rolled a small cloud of very black smoke, they shouted forth, "Play away, Five!" and in an instant Cheesy, who happened to be standing by the brake of the said number, received a blow against the shoulder, which sent him sprawling into a small flood of waste water. Without knowing very well what had happened, but entertaining a confused idea that the town was tumbling down about his ears, he raised himself upon his hands and knees, and darted at an opening in the legs of the crowd, where he was pressed, trodden upon, and knocked about, for some moments, in a most reckless manner.

When he regained his feet, the fire was extinguished. The firemen cried "All out!" and began to haul off the engines and limber up the hose-pipes. The spectators echoed "All out!" and began to disperse. The hack, truck and omnibus drivers growled "All out!" and whipped their horses, relieving their feelings in attempts to drive over scattered pedestrians. Cheesy muttered "All out," in a vacant manner, rubbing the back of his

head with a look of bewilderment, as if alluding to his brains, and wondering if the thing which somebody was kicking towards him, from under the feet of the crowd, was really and truly his hat.

Cheesy picked up the article, shook the water off, stretched it into shape, and put it on his head. This done, he cast a startled look around him, and said, "*B-y g-r-a-c-i-o-u-s!*" in his deep, coarse-grained voice, expressive of the utmost amazement.

"What 's the matter?" asked a soberly-dressed man, with a benevolent countenance, observing his bewilderment.

"By gracious!" repeated Cheesy, continuing to stare all about him. "I don't know where I be! I was with Mr. Mer'vale. I left him — I swow I don' know where! Can you tell me which way I come?"

"I 'm sorry to say I cannot," replied the gentleman, smiling at Cheesy's ludicrous figure. "Did you come with an engine?"

"Yes; with this 'ere one, I guess 't was," cried Cheesy, eagerly.

The soberly-dressed gentleman said, if that was the case, he had no better advice to give than that he should follow the engine when it returned.

"I will, by gracious!" exclaimed Cheesy. "And, look here; if you see Mr. Mer'vale coming after me, I wish ye would tell him, will ye? I want to find him, the wust way; for he 's got my cut, and vest, and bundle."

The gentleman laughed, made some pleasant remark about the likelihood of his meeting and recognizing a person he never saw, in such a place as Boston, and walked away.

Cheesy then began to make eager inquiries of the firemen, concerning "Mr. Mer'vale," the engine he came with, and the way

back. As he manifested a decided talent for throwing himself in everybody's way, he received many a rude push and gruff reply, but no satisfaction whatever on the subject which filled his anxious mind. At length some boys began to make fun of him, tripping him up, and pulling off his hat.

"Come!" said he, with an incensed look, "quit! le'me be! I an't doing nothing to you, be I, — say?"

He selected the weakest boy in the crowd, gave him a terrible frown, and drew back, holding his fist behind his hip, ready for a blow. The boy quailed, but, somebody pushing him forward, and promising to back him, he advanced a small defiant shoulder towards Cheesy, told him to "hit him if he da'st," in a feeble voice, at the same time looking very pale.

"Who wants to hit ye?" demanded Cheesy, retiring from the field. "You jest let me alone, that's all I ask. Here!" to a tall fellow, who snatched off his hat. "Give that up, — come!"

"I han't got yer hat," laughed the tall fellow, tossing it over Cheesy's head. "What ye talking about?"

Cheesy turned to chase it, when, by a skilfully-managed accident, a fireman emptied a hose-pipe over his back. A shout of exultation arose from the spectators. But what was sport to them was death to Cheesy. Gasping for breath, he clapped his hands behind him on his dripping clothes, and uttered a loud wail of exasperation and distress. The shouts increased; the weak boy danced and cheered, and Cheesy, quite breaking down beneath the burden of his woes, withdrew blubbering to the wall, where he wedged his elbow into the bricks with his forehead, and lifted up one foot in an attitude of remonstrance against his persecutors.

At this juncture, his hat was flung at his head, and the cry was

to "let him alone." He was afterwards permitted to go off with his engine undisturbed; and, although still suffering a good deal from his drenching, and from a heavy sense of his misfortunes, he cheered up, polished his face on his sleeve, and took hold of the rope with some spirit. The company returned leisurely, and he had plenty of time to look about him. But the way back seemed interminable. He was astonished to find that he had run so far, and was also surprised to see the streets so much quieter than when he passed through them before. The city did not seem the same. The phenomenon occasioned him a good deal of uneasiness; but he did not venture to ask an explanation of any one, for fear of getting himself into trouble. All this time, he turned his despairing eyes on every side in search of Martin, and looked far ahead into the darkness, straining his sight, in the vain hope of discovering some indications of his presence.

It was in a luckless hour that Cheesy put his trust in the engine. It proved a false guide. After leading him an unknown distance from the street he wished to find, it drew up before a small building, the doors of which were thrown open to receive it, and stopped. Cheesy regarded this operation with increased alarm.

"Don't you go no fu'ther?" he asked, with trepidation, of a strong, good-natured fireman.

"We don't go no further jest yit," was the reply. "We think of tyin' up here for a spell."

Cheesy's heart sank, and his knees grew weak. He wished to know if that was their stopping-place "for good."

"Wal, 't is," was the overwhelming and hope-crushing response.

In the perturbation of his soul, Cheesy could only utter incoherent and unintelligible sentences, from which, however, the fire-

man gathered that, having been betrayed and led astray by the treacherous engine, he wished to go back somewhere and find somebody, who was waiting for him impatiently and in great distress.

"What ye jawin' about?" asked the fireman. "Where is it ye want to go? Who is't ye want to find? Speak out, if ye want anything of me!"

Inspired with confidence, Cheesy made a second attempt, and expressed himself more clearly. Then he learned that the engine had come home by a circuitous route, to avoid a hill; and that, if he wished to find the spot where he joined it, he must pass around the second corner, take the first turn to the left, the third to the right, another to the left, and keep on past the church, straight ahead, with his eyes peeled, until he discovered the place. Possessed of this clear and unmistakable information, Cheesy set out in wild haste, repeating the directions aloud as he ran along the street. But, as might have been expected, he was scarcely out of sight of the engine-house when he began to transpose and jumble together the right turns and left turns, the corners and the churches, confusedly.

"Fust turn to the right," he muttered, breathlessly; "third turn to left; another to the right, — no, another to the left, then keep on to the second church on the corner, — no — to the church on the second corner, — that 's it. Now, le' me see: fust turn to right, second turn to left, pass the third church on the corner, —— Darn it!" exclaimed Cheesy, getting perplexed, "I forgit! No, I don't, nuther! Second turn to left, fust turn to right, pass the church — " and so forth, and so forth.

Persevering in this certain method of keeping the directions in mind, Cheesy went on, until, making his second turn to the right,

he discovered that it took him into a court, where his career was terminated by a lamp-post, door-steps, and a house set, as he afterwards expressed it, "right acrost the road." Then, in perfect despair, he made use of the steps to sit down upon, and burst into an uncontrollable fit of weeping, calling himself a fool, and reddening his nose with the friction of his sleeve. In his utter woe, he would have given his interest in Martin's Romance, sacrificed his hopes of a clerkship, and risked the peril of death at his step-mother's hands, could he have crept quietly and humbly into his mean little chamber at home, and lain down upon his forsaken bed, never, never, never to leave his native village more.

He sat there sobbing and shivering, and grinding his eyes with his wrists, until a ruddy hope rose like a full moon upon the night of his despair. He thought of his Uncle Jesse, his father's Boston brother, and blamed himself for not having gone in search of him before, instead of worrying childishly about his lost companion. He wiped his face, got off the door-step, and looked around him. Seeing some persons passing on the walk near the head of the court, he approached them, and, accosting the first he met, who happened to be a short Irishman, smoking a short pipe, inquired for his Uncle Jesse.

"Uncle Jesse!" repeated the Irishman. "And who is Uncle Jesse?"

"*My* Uncle Jesse," replied Cheesy, disgusted with the man's stupidity. "Whose uncle d' ye s'pose?"

"*Your* Uncle Jesse, is it?" exclaimed the other.

"You don't know him?"

"Who said I did n't? I war'nt I know him as well as he knows me, and perhaps betther. Jist tell me what his name is, besides Uncle Jesse."

"Dabney, of course!" replied Cheesy, impatiently.

"Yes, to be sure!" said the Irishman, puffing out a cloud of smoke with great self-complacency. "Dabney 's the man. Sure and I think he used to be a good frind of mine, and a fine fellow he is too. I remimber me very well now, his name was Jesse."

Cheesy brightened, and began to feel very friendly towards the smoking Irishman.

"You know where he lives, then?"

"Who said I did? 'T is n't ivery man knows that, to be sure. I belave it 's in Hanover-sthreet, though. What 'd ye say his name was?"

"DAB-NEY!" exclaimed the boy, growing impatient again.

"Inquire as you go along," answered his smoking friend, coolly. "Most any one can tell ye all aboot him. I belave it 's in Hanover-sthreet; if 't is n't there, it 's somewhere else, but I 'm forgetting intirely."

Strongly suspicious of the Irishman's candor, Cheesy gave him a doubtful look, and limped with his sore feet out of the court. Then commenced the most perplexing, unsatisfactory and wearisome series of investigations of which it is possible to conceive. The boy could meet with no one who knew anything about his uncle; and an hour later, giving up the search in despair, he lay down upon another door-step, with the intention of remaining there until morning.

But inexorable fate pursued Cheesy, in the shape of a watchman, who roused him up, shook a little life into him, and asked him where he belonged. Cheesy blubbered forth the story of his woes, and was straightway marched off to the watch-house.

"Any time when you think you 've cried enough," growled his

guide, on the way, "put in the stopple and hold up. What 's the matter with your shirt? Has it been wet?"

"They played the ingine on to me!" sobbed Cheesy.

The watchman, although harsh and unfeeling in his manner, cheered the boy with the promise of a warm berth and a secure apartment, which he could enjoy until morning. Cheesy was so much affected by this kindness, that he could not refrain from tears. But, on entering the watch-house, he began to doubt the benevolence of his friend's motives. He was shown into a plain, naked sort of a room, where a tall, large man, who was called "Captain," received him pleasantly, and demanded if he had any weapons about him.

"Han't got nothing," murmured Cheesy.

"Empty your pockets, and let 's see," observed the large gentleman.

Snivelling pitifully, the boy slowly and reluctantly put his hands in his pockets, and took out a butternut and shingle-nail.

"Come, that an't all,—empty!" cried the captain.

Cheesy hauled out a piece of chalk, a tin whistle, a brass button, three or four jack-stones and a pop-gun. He displayed these valuables with a doleful face, observing that he guessed that was about all. Not satisfied, however, the large captain undertook to insert his large hand in one of the pockets, splitting the stitches without mercy.

"Let 's have that knife," said he, sternly.

"The knife? Did n't I give it to you?" drawled Cheesy. "O, here it is," said he, with a lugubrious look, surrendering Martin's present.

The captain pocketed the weapon, and, having returned to the boy all the other articles, pushed him rudely before him down a

flight of stairs. He carried a bunch of keys, the jingling of which inspired Cheesy with distrust.

"You an't going to lock me up, be ye?" he asked, with an appealing look, on finding himself in a narrow hall before a row of cells.

The captain replied by throwing open a cell-door with a clanging sound. Cheesy walked in dejectedly, and the key was turned in the lock. Then, with a feeling of utter desolation, he looked through the grating of the door, and saw the captain ascend the stairs; after which, creeping into the bunk, he wrapped a blanket around him, made a pillow of his arm, and cried himself to sleep.

Strange dreams visited Cheesy that night. The events of the day shifted and ran into each other, in his vision, like dissolving views. Again he was lost in the great city. He sat down on a door-step to bemoan his fate, when suddenly Mrs. Dabney darted out upon him, and drove him over into the cow-pasture. The cow turned into a fire-engine, and played upon him; and the pasture swarmed with men and boys, who kicked a toad-stool about from one to the other, and tossed it over his head. The toad-stool appeared at first to be his hat; then it was a squirrel which he was chasing along the fences, while Martin and Caleb Thorne were resting with blind Alice under the shade of a road-side tree. Seeing his persecutors again, who now came in the form of a flock of hissing geese, he jumped over the fence, and met his Uncle Jesse, who was on his way to Bagdad, with a bundle on his shoulder. Suddenly Uncle Jesse changed to a watchman, with a short pipe in his mouth; who, having locked Cheesy up in a school-house, swallowed the key, which proved to be a wedge of gingerbread, and instantly became a hose-carriage, with a calf's head, and a tail which went up through the roof like a stove-pipe. Finally Cheesy

seemed to be lying on his own bed at home, while his step-mother stood by and shook him.

The shaking was real, and Cheesy awoke. Startled at finding himself in a strange place, he uttered a hoarse cry. But gradually a recollection of the watch-house dawned upon his mind. It was a watchman who was shaking him up; and, looking in the face of a third person, who was reeling into the cell, he recognised his friend and fellow-traveller, Caleb Thorne.

IX.

THE WATCH-HOUSE COMPANIONS.

UP started Cheesy, with a cry of joy. In the excitement of the moment, he struck his head against the bunk above, with a force which filled the entire region of brain under his left eye-brow with sparks. He did not mind that, however.

"Hillo, Mr. Thorne!" he exclaimed, chuckling with delight. "I 'm glad to see ye! How 'd you find me, though?"

Caleb regarded him with an uncertain, haggard look, and seemed making an effort to recall to mind something he had forgotten.

"Get into the upper bunk, young man," said the watchman. "Do you hear? Let this man sleep where you are. Get in there, old fellow!"

The speaker withdrew, locking the two up in the cell together. Cheesy began to rub his eyes with bewilderment.

"Are you going to stop here, too?" he asked, staring at Caleb. "An't it morning?"

The mendicant steadied himself by the wall, and seized hold of

the grating of the door, letting his head fall heavily upon his breast.

"Where did you leave Mr. Mer'vale?" inquired Cheesy, timidly, after a pause.

Upon that Caleb started, and looked at him more fixedly, staggering forward and laying his hand upon his shoulder.

"Are you the boy that was with Mr. Merrivale?" he asked, in a depressed, indistinct voice.

"Why, yes! did n't you know it?"

"Where is he? what has he done with my child?"

Caleb spoke in a strange, passionate manner, which filled Cheesy with alarm.

"I don' know," he faltered. "I thought you did. I thought he sent you to find me."

Caleb's head fell again upon his breast. Muttering unintelligibly, he rolled into the bunk Cheesy had vacated, and lay there, uttering faint groans with every breath he drew.

It took Cheesy a long time to get rid of the idea that Caleb had been sent by Martin to find him out, and deliver him from the watch-house. But at length he saw how it was. The mendicant had murdered Mr. Merrivale for his money, and been arrested! Possessed with this uncomfortable notion, he shrank with curdling blood from the assassin's presence, and looked miserably through the iron grating for the captain, who he hoped would in mercy let him out or remove his dreadful companion.

The first object which attracted Cheesy's attention was a young woman, coarsely dressed, but quite rosy and pretty, who came tripping down stairs, followed by the captain with his keys. She appeared very merry over her misfortunes. Laughing in the man's face, she inquired which room he was going to put her in

to-night — the old one? — as if she had been there before. Passing by Cheesy's door, she called him her dove, asked him what he was staring at, and snapped her fingers at his nose. Whilst the captain was shutting her up, an assistant appeared with a young girl, not more than fourteen years old, plainly but very neatly attired, with her hair, which was long and black, fallen in disorder about her face and neck. This was quite a different case from the other. The girl was sobbing violently. To be brought to such a place seemed to give her the keenest tortures of soul; and when the bold woman invited her to share her cell, telling her to cheer up and laugh it off, she pleaded, with trembling earnestness, that she might not be thrown into such company, for she was not one like her, — she called Heaven to witness that she was not.

"She tells the truth, I'm pretty sure, captain," said the assistant. "I know her father; a good man enough, only when he is drunk; then he 's in the habit of turning his family out doors. How long had you been in the street when the watch picked you up?"

The girl said not long, and went sobbing and moaning into the cell adjoining Cheesy's. The other woman laughed, and told her, for her comfort, that after she had been to the watch-house as often as she had, she would n't mind it; she would rather enjoy the thing, for variety's sake.

"The captain is a good fellow; an't ye, captain?" she cried, archly. "Him and me 's old friends."

"I'm afraid our acquaintance is going to be broke off for a little while, my lass," replied the captain. "You 'll get sent over this time, sure. You 're good for six months, my girl."

The threat appeared to irritate her, and — still preserving her artificial gayety — she railed at the captain spitefully. He

laughed, and asked her if she did not want to wear the "ruffles" a little while, and retire to the lock-up for the night; an insinuation which seemed slightly to obstruct her flow of spirits.

At that moment, a slim gentleman, with a smiling, inquisitive face, appeared on the stairs, and addressed the captain's assistant familiarly, by the name of Moore.

"Ha, Peter!" replied Mr. Moore, who was a shrewd, quiet, intelligent young man; "you 're just in time."

"How 's business?" asked Peter. "Is there much doing to-night?"

"Business was rather dull, the first of the evening," replied Mr. Moore. "But it 's coming up a little now. In fact, it 's getting quite brisk. Should n't you say so, captain?"

"It 's a little lively just now," observed the captain. "Is this Mr. Toplink?"

"That 's my name," said the slim gentleman, overflowing with the best of feeling. "Happy to meet you, captain. This is my friend, Mr. Leviston. Any interesting cases?" asked the slim gentleman, after the formal introduction of his companion.

The captain catalogued his guests in a rapid, matter-of-fact manner, styling Cheesy a fellow who had left home without his mother's knowledge, and got lost; and describing Caleb as a countryman, who had been picked up in the street whilst laboring under a heavy load of bricks. Cheesy felt very much ashamed on being exhibited and stared at as a curiosity; but, at the same time, it was a relief to him to know that Mr. Thorne was guilty of no worse crime than that of stealing bricks, and to feel that Mr. Merrivale still lived.

The visitors did not seem to consider Cheesy and his companion as worthy of much attention. Mr. Leviston, in fact, regarded

the whole exhibition with indifference. He looked on with a contemptuous smile, when Toplink, engaging the saucy young woman in conversation, endeavored to cope with her in the use of slang terms and coarse wit. But some careless phrase the woman had let fall attracted him; and, on the discomfiture of Toplink, he advanced and spoke to her. His address was grave and dignified, and she could not but show him some little respect. Although inclined to be facetious at first, she gradually became thoughtful and silent as he talked to her; and at length Cheesy could hear her answer in low and passionate tones, broken by sobs. Mr. Leviston told her that he once knew a girl who was beautiful and proud; who was idolized by all her friends; but who had turned traitress to everything that was good and pure and true, and broken the hearts of her parents, and made one, at least, who loved her, doubt whether there was any such thing as virtue in the world.

"You may have been like her, as she is now like you," he added, while the woman wept without restraint. "If so, go back, — go back! You know not what you do!" And so he left her.

His few words had made almost another being of her. No more light, artificial laughter rung from her hollow heart that night, but tears gushed up from fountains which had long lain buried beneath the loathsome rubbish of an evil life.

Whilst Toplink and his friend remained below, three other cases were brought down. One was a tall, slender individual, with features which were fine and intellectual in their expression, but so deadly pale, so ghastly and solemn, as to startle the beholder. He was fashionably dressed, but showed no shirt-collar; his coat, buttoned to his throat, looked as if it had been dragged and rolled in the street; and his hat, which might have been a glossy

beaver an hour or two before, appeared sadly battered and soiled. This person walked with excessive dignity, and entered his allotted cell without moving a muscle of his face. If he had been an emperor, with the honor of nations depending upon the gravity of his deportment, he could not have preserved his state more conscientiously.

After him came a drunken Irishman, who had been taken up in a street-fight. But the last was perhaps the most painfully interesting case of all. This was another young girl, not more than sixteen at the most. She was in a perfectly helpless condition; and Cheesy heard the captain tell Mr. Toplink that she was taken from a house which the police had entered in search of burglars, and that she had in all probability been drugged. Although she seemed to lack the power of moving hand or foot, she appeared conscious of all that was taking place around her, and kept moaning, like a dying child, "Mother! mother! mother!" in the most plaintive tones, and with a hopeless, helpless look, which moved the hearts of all who witnessed the piteous spectacle. Mr. Leviston became quite excited. He demanded, almost angrily, why should such corruption and disease be allowed to exist in the very brain of New England, whilst she was sending her spiritual physicians to India and Asia, and forwarding Bibles and clothing to unknown heathen tribes? The captain shook his head dubiously; Mr. Moore observed that it was no use doing anything for some people, except to shut 'em up when you catch 'em; and Mr. Toplink added, "Very true."

The girl that had been drugged was placed in the cell with her who had been turned out of doors by her father, and the men soon after went up stairs. Then Cheesy, who climbed over Caleb Thorne and got into the bunk above, could hear the helpless

creature moan faintly and more faintly, "Mother! mother!" while her new companion endeavored to soothe her with kind words. Listening to these sounds, he once more fell asleep, and did not awake until morning.

Cheesy and Caleb were taken from the cell, and restored to liberty at the same time. The captain gave the boy his knife, which he termed a weapon, and told a man in attendance to conduct him to Mr. J. Dabney's store.

"Come along, then," said the man, setting out at a fast walk.

Cheesy was in high spirits. Freedom, and the anticipation of a speedy meeting with his uncle, excited a sudden reäction in his mind. Although his limbs were stiff from past fatigue and exposure, and although he experienced a hollowness in the region of the stomach, betokening long abstinence from food, which gave him no little uneasiness, he followed his guide with joyful alacrity, grinning and chuckling with delight.

The morning air was chill and bracing. The streets, to Cheesy's eye, looked pleasant and fresh. He enjoyed their novelty with keen relish. How changed the city was since he went wandering through its labyrinthine ways, homeless and hopeless, supperless and lost! He could now scarce repress the gushes of song which rose spontaneously to his lips; and all his trouble of the night before seemed like an ugly dream.

After passing through several streets, his conductor stopped at a store where there was a squint-eyed lad taking the shutters from the windows.

"Where 's Mr. Dabney?" he asked.

"He han't come down," replied the lad. "Do you want to see him for anything particular?"

"I want to leave this boy in his hands. He calls himself his

nephew. I suppose he can stop here till Mr. Dabney comes down?"

The lad grumbled that he supposed so, and regarded Cheesy with a suspicious look, spiced with contempt.

"Is Mr. Dabney your uncle?" he inquired, with a sneer, after the man was gone.

The lad was rather smartly dressed, and Cheesy, thinking he might be a clerk, stood a little in awe of him. Yet he answered, with a good deal of confidence, that Mr. Dabney was his uncle, and that he was very anxious to see him.

"I guess he 'll be anxious to see you, too," muttered the lad. "Here, don't get in my way," he added, hitting him with a shutter.

Cheesy was pretty sure that the hit was intended as an affront, but, feeling no disposition to quarrel, he held his peace and began to whistle, to let the fellow know he did n't care. So he stood staring about him, until he chanced to look in the direction whence he had come. Instantly his spirits sank, and the notes of his whistling ceased. He would have fled around the corner, or concealed himself in the store; but it was too late. Caleb Thorne, approaching, with his burden and staff, had his eye upon him, and he could not escape.

"How do ye feel this morning?" asked the boy, with some embarrassment.

"Look here!" said Caleb, beckoning him mysteriously aside. "Do you know why I followed you?"

"No," faltered Cheesy, looking down. Caleb acted so much like an insane man that he was afraid of him.

"Tell me where your friend is," said he, in a husky whisper, seizing his arm.

"Mr. Mer'vale?" suggested Cheesy.

"Yes," muttered Caleb. "He has taken off my child. He has stolen her from me."

"Don't, if you please, Mr. Thorne!" said Cheesy, in some alarm, trying to loose his hold. "'T an't me that done it. I don' know where Mr. Mer'vale is. Come, I wish you would n't, Mr. Thorne; you hurt!"

Caleb released his arm, but insisted that he must know where Mr. Merrivale had gone.

"I declare I don't!" Cheesy protested. "I only wish I did. I got lost from him. The old woman give him a letter to her folks here in Boston, but I can't think of their names. I never heard but two or three times, and I 'm forever forgitting names 'at I don't care nothing about. She used to call 'em Simeon's folks, 'most always. Mr. Mer'vale was going there, but I don' know where they live."

Caleb's manner changed, and he began to reproach himself with such fierce and angry passion that Cheesy expected each moment to see him dash his head against the wall. At length he became more calm; but, still trembling with his recent agitation, he begged of Cheesy to go with him and keep him company.

"I can't," replied Cheesy. "I 'm waiting for my uncle. I can't git no breakfas' till I see him, and I 'm half-starved."

"I 'll give you something to eat," said Caleb. "Don't refuse. I 'm afraid to be alone. Will you come?"

"I shall git lost agin," murmured Cheesy, undecided.

"I 'll see to that. I won't take you out of sight of this street. Go with me a little ways," insisted Caleb.

Caleb was a sort of nightmare to Cheesy; but how to shake him off he did not know. Perhaps the poor man's entreaty and

distress prevailed upon him; perhaps he was fascinated by the insane glitter of his eye; or anticipations of breakfast may have been the bait which led him astray. But Cheesy himself always declared that he withdrew with Mr. Thorne because the lad who took down the shutters had his suspicious squint-eye upon him, and it made him feel uncomfortable to be watched while in conversation "with such an odd old codger."

"Look you," whispered Caleb, holding fast by Cheesy's arm. "You must stand by me like a hero till I find my way out of this. I don't know very well what I'm about, just now."

"Don't you?" asked Cheesy, with vacant wonder.

"I shall be all right pretty soon. I've lost my child and been robbed, and that's what confuses me."

Before leaving the watch-house, Cheesy, inquiring how Caleb had parted with Martin and Alice, had thrown him into such a fit of remorseful passion, that he did not like again to allude to the subject. He ventured, however, to ask what he meant by saying that he had been robbed.

"I had a little purse of money," said Caleb. "I was saving it for my child. I would not use it on the journey, for I knew it would all be needed here. I humbled myself to beg by the way, in order to keep that little sum untouched. But it is gone. It went from me last night. I don't know how; but it is gone."

Caleb's voice was smothered by a rattling sound in his throat, which gave Cheesy the impression that he was choking to death.

"Where was you?" asked the boy, at length.

"I don't remember. The scenes of last night are all confused in my mind. But I know I could not have spent much money. The change I had in my pocket would have sufficed to pay for all I drank. I think I took out the purse once, and only once."

"Perhaps you laid it on the counter, and forgot it," suggested Cheesy.

Caleb made no reply, but walked on with quick, nervous steps, breathing with difficulty, and looking gloomily upon the ground.

"But I will recover from this," he muttered, at length. "So help me Heaven, I will be a man again! I will find my child! With her to work for and protect, I shall atone for the evil I have done, — if such a thing can ever be."

"I guess I can't go no fu'ther jes' now," said Cheesy, in a faint tone, making a feeble effort to escape from his grasp.

"It 's only a step further," persisted Caleb. "I saw the place as I came by. Don't leave me so. I shall be better soon. By Heaven!" he added, desperately, "I cannot let you go!"

"Now you 're too bad!" whined Cheesy, frightened into compliance. "I shall go and git lost agin, sure 's the world. Don't, Mr. Thorne! I don't want ter. Come! what makes ye drag a feller off in this way, agin his will?"

"I promised you a breakfast, and you shall have it," rejoined Caleb, in a more rational tone and manner. "I 'm not going to hurt you. But, for her sake, if not for my sake, you must keep by me a few minutes longer. Here 's the place. It was not open when I came past, but it is open now."

It was a narrow little shop, with three golden balls hung over the door. Caleb entered, dragging Cheesy in after him. In the window of the room, paper money, gold and silver, watches and other jewelry, were displayed. On the shelves lay quite a variety of goods, mostly clothing, however, with numerous packages and bundles, large and small, occupying considerable space near the window. Over the counter leaned a pleasant, sleek-looking gentleman, who, picking his teeth, and looking unconcernedly in Caleb's face, asked what he could do for his visitors.

Caleb took off his pack, and opened it on the counter with trembling hands.

"Do you wish to shove 'em all up?" inquired the proprietor, handling the articles with a cool, business air.

Caleb selected a child's dress, a little shawl, a small pair of shoes, and three or four trifles of less importance, saying that he would retain those and part with all the rest.

"The rest won't suit my purpose," observed the pawnbroker, carelessly. "You 'd better take 'em somewhere else."

Caleb was agitated. He bent over the articles he had reserved, folding them together, and spreading them out again, for some moments, in silence.

"I can redeem them when I please, I suppose," he said, at length, in a hollow voice.

The man said, yes, to be sure, and went on to name his terms, picking his teeth the while, with the same cold air of unconcern.

"Take all the stuff together," said he, "I can advance you two dollars on it. It 's a poor bargain at that."

"I must have the money," answered Caleb.

The pawnbroker gave him his two dollars and a check for his property, at the same time asking Cheesy, with a humorous twinkle of the eye, if he had anything he wished to put up the spout. The boy started, changed color, felt of himself, as if to make sure that he was not leaving his shirt behind him, and hastened to back out of the shop.

"It is a hard thing to leave my child's garments with such a man," muttered Caleb, when once more in the street. "But I shall have them again soon. I will work with these hands. O, God! forgive me, and help me for her sake!"

Cheesy was now more than ever desirous of escaping from his

friend; but the latter, having fixed his eye upon an oyster-house, entered, forcing him to go in with him. They took their places in a stall, and Mr. Thorne gave directions to the waiter.

Cheesy sat staring about him, and munching dry crackers, while Caleb, resting his head upon his clinched hands, breathed hard and loud, and shook as if with an ague-chill. There was a struggle in the poor man's breast of which the boy knew nothing. Suddenly he started up, and rushed to the bar. Cheesy saw him point to a row of decanters, and call for some kind of liquor, in a hoarse whisper; then seize the glass the man in attendance placed before him, pour out a dram with a shaking hand, drink it with unseemly eagerness, and strike the tumbler down upon the counter. Cheesy was taken with a sort of panic. His face became very pale, whitening visibly through its smeary disguise. He glanced from Caleb to the door, and from the door to Caleb, with a wild look, expressive of a total collapse of his physical courage. For a moment he was undecided; but when Caleb, calling for oysters, began to swallow them with avidity, as they were opened and placed before him on the shell, he could rest no longer in his seat. He got up, and moved tremblingly by the entrance of the stall, looking hurriedly around him, until his companion, dashing another dram into the glass, raised it with a nervous hand to his lips. Such an opportunity for escape was not to be neglected: Cheesy darted out, ran down the street and fled into an alley, where he slackened his speed somewhat, and for the first time ventured to glance behind him, shaking all the while from head to foot, as if Caleb had been a fiend, who might at any time mistake him for an oyster, swallow him alive, and wash him down with rum.

X.

CHEESY FINDS HIS UNCLE.

SATISFIED that he was not pursued, Cheesy recovered from his panic. The tremor of fright was still on him, however, when he emerged from the alley. Glancing behind him from time to time, to see if his foe was in sight, he came out upon the street beyond, and looked anxiously up and down, whimpering with vexation. He was lost again, — just as he had expected he would be, all along.

"What did he want ter go and do it fur?" he muttered, with bitter feelings of resentment against Caleb. "I felt sure he was gitt'n' me into a scrape. I don' know where I be, more'n nothing."

There were a good many people passing, and Cheesy was confident that some of them must be well enough acquainted in that part of the town to direct him to his uncle's store. He accordingly stopped a bland old gentleman, and inquired his way. The bland old gentleman smiled, and, patting him on the shoulder, told

him that if he would cross the street, and enter the store opposite, he would be able to learn all about Mr. Dabney's establishment.

Cheesy was doubtful of success in that quarter, but, after some hesitation, he went over and put his dejected face in at the door. To his surprise, he recognized a person with whom he had already become slightly acquainted. It was the cross-eyed lad he had seen taking down his uncle's shutters half an hour before; and, on looking about him, he discovered, with some amazement, that the place to which the bland gentleman had directed him for information was the very place he wanted to find.

"By gracious!" muttered Cheesy; "'s queer I didn't know Uncle Jesse's store. I thought 't was on t' other side of the street."

The boy was now comparatively happy. But he was still open to the persecutions of Caleb, whom he expected every moment to see coming after him, with fell intent to ruin his peace. A supercilious smile on the countenance of the lad, as he dusted the counters, also gave Cheesy a good deal of uneasiness. It caused him to feel himself vastly inferior to city boys, and to realize the awkwardness of appearing in the world without his jacket.

Two or three clerks — very smart-looking young fellows — soon after made their appearance; and one of them — a tall, genteel-looking individual, with a large shirt-collar and a handsome whisker, whose deportment inspired Cheesy with awe — asked him, in an imperious manner, as he stood by the door outside, what he was rubbing his back against the wall in that way for; didn't he see that he would wear a hole right through into the store in a little while? The cross-eyed lad snickered convulsively at the savage humor of this sally, thereby adding materially to the embarrassment and discomfort of Cheesy, who gave a sullen

look behind him, as if to satisfy himself with regard to the hole, and grunted forth the fact that he was waiting for his uncle. The genteel clerk asked if it was Uncle John or Uncle Peter he expected.

"Uncle Jesse," muttered Cheesy, pouting and kicking the sidewalk.

"Uncle Jesse!" repeated the genteel clerk, with an incredulous smile. "Hold up your head, — there!" He placed his hand in Cheesy's hair, and straightened his neck against the wall. "Look me in the eye." Cheesy gave him a lowering glance, in which there was mingled fear and anger. "Tell me what your name is."

"Cheseb'o' Dabn'," mumbled the boy, struggling to get away.

"Do you mean to say Mr. Dabney is your uncle?"

Cheesy affirmed that such was the case; and the genteel clerk, whose humor appeared to be a good deal chilled by the discovery, began to question him in a less overbearing manner.

"I come to Boston with Mr. Mer'vale," said the boy. "I got lost from him, and I want ter see my uncle. I han't had no breakfas' this morning."

Thereupon the genteel clerk informed him that Mr. Dabney, having been unwell the day before, would not probably come down before twelve o'clock, if he did then.

"Is he up stairs?" Cheesy wished to know, with a distressed look.

"Down town, I mean," said the clerk, while the cross-eyed lad giggled insultingly. "Perhaps the best way will be for you to go up to the house. You 're sure he 's your uncle?"

Cheesy was really beginning to have serious doubts on the subject, occasioned by the sneers of the cross-eyed lad, who

appeared to know so much more about his affairs than he did himself; but he managed to reäffirm the fact quite stoutly, in a manner to satisfy the genteel clerk.

"Jake," said the latter, authoritatively, "go and show this boy the way to Mr. Dabney's house."

With a cynical look, the cross-eyed lad put away the duster, rubbed down his cuffs, pulled up his dickey, and told Cheesy to "come along." Our hero followed with alacrity, glancing apprehensively around for Caleb Thorne, as they went along, until the alley, out of which he had expected to see that terrible and mysterious being rush in full pursuit, was out of sight.

"That's a perty slick kind of store of Uncle Jesse's," observed the boy, pressing close to his companion's side.

"O, it is, eh?" said Jake. "I'm glad ye told me."

"I'd no idee Boston was such a big place," continued Cheesy, persevering in his efforts to conciliate the cross-eyed. "The roads are perty narrer, some of 'em. You call 'em streets here."

"Do we? Streets, are they? I'm much obliged to ye," replied Jake, with a derisive grin.

"What does that 'ere sign mean?" asked Cheesy, pointing to a notice on the wall — "STICK NO BILLS."

"O, don't you know? I was in hopes you'd tell *me*," said the cross-eyed. "I've heard what it's for, but supposed, of course, you'd know better 'n me."

"What is 't fur?" inquired Cheesy, disregarding the lad's irony in his determination to be sociable.

"You see," returned Jake, "there 's a secret society — "

"Secret society! What's that?"

"You don't know what a secret society is? I'm surprised at it! Shall I tell you what I think it is? Well, a company of

desperate men have some mysterious object to put through, generally something against the law, and so they get together in a dark room, and swear to stand by each other to the last, and work for the cause night and day, in all kinds of weather, rain or shine, Sundays not excepted."

"Sho! is that it?" cried Cheesy.

"There was one society," continued Jake, "that banded together to burn every house within nine miles of Boston that was more 'n 'leven story high."

"Do tell me if they did!" exclaimed Cheesy.

"Yes; and there was another that used to ketch old bachelors over seventy-five, and old maids over sixty, and marry 'em by force, and threaten to kill 'em if they did n't live together affectionately afterwards, or if they complained of the society."

"What did they do that fur?"

"For the fun of the thing, I suppose. But it 's a fact that any quantity of happy marriages have been made, and some of the most beautiful families in the city have been grown up in this way."

"I want to know!" ejaculated Cheesy.

"The last society that was started was the 'Secret Seven,'" Jake went on, very gravely. "They held their meetings in a cave, dug out for the purpose, under one of the first Orthodox churches in the city. They was all church-members, of the hottest kind; and they used to attend prayer-meetings in the vestry, and talk pious, — then, when it was getting late, they 'd slip out, one by one, into a dark passage, go through a trap-door, which opened by a spring, and drop down into the secret cave."

"You don't say!" cried Cheesy.

"Certainly," said the cross-eyed. "The society was discovered

by the sexton, who touched the spring by mistake, one night, after a prayer-meeting, and tumbled in on 'em through the trap-door, as if he 'd been sent for."

"By gracious!" burst forth Cheesy. "He did n't though, did he?"

"O, yes; that was all in the newspapers at the time," affirmed Jake, winking and coughing. "The sexton was jest about scar't to death, too. But the Secret Seven was worse off 'n he was, or else they 'd have made mince meat of him without stopping to think twice. They supposed he was the Devil, and scrambled out of the trap-door like mad, leaving behind 'em their seven black masks, their seven short daggers, and all the records of the society's doings."

"That an't all true, though, is it? What did the Secret Seven do in the cave?"

"Why, it was there they laid their plans for assassinating every person of the name of William, or Bill, that they could find. They had a partic'lar grudge against that name, it seems; and at one time there was so many stabbed in dark alleys and by-streets that the city tried to put a stop to it, by posting the notices, — 'STICK NO BILLS.' I had a cousin killed by these fellows."

"You 're trying to fool me," rejoined Cheesy, with a perplexed look.

"O! am I?" cried Jake, sarcastically, looking at Cheesy with one eye, and at a barber's pole with the other. "I 'm glad you told me — it 's news."

Dreading his resentment, Cheesy hastened to recant his infidelity; whereupon the cross-eyed punished him by relating the most outrageously absurd stories, and compelling him to acknowledge an orthodox belief in each and all of them. In this entertaining

and useful manner they traversed the streets, which contained so much novelty and interest for the fresh and innocent Cheesy. Several trifling incidents occurred to add variety to the scenes. Jake beguiled his companion into out-of-the-way places; or hid away from him around corners and in convenient door-ways, while Cheesy walked on, talking loudly, supposing his guide was at his elbow; in order to enjoy his perplexity on discovering that he was deserted and betrayed. The cross-eyed was never without an excuse for these pleasantries: he ran into a shop to speak to his Aunt Susan, or darted up an alley to call after Dan Blake, or retired under a door-way to cough; and Cheesy was fain to express himself satisfied with these explanations. Jake also met acquaintances, and appeared mysterious. With one he jabbered inarticulately, using discordant combinations of consonant sounds, which he pretended was Spanish. With another he conversed in pantomime, exchanging the most ridiculous and grotesque gestures and grimaces with him, of which the feat of pointing first to heaven, then to the sidewalk, afterwards to the wondering Cheesy, and finally down their own expanded throats, was perhaps the most frequent and remarkable. This individual Jake styled the Junior Professor of Deaf-and-Dumb in Jog College. Of a third, the cross-eyed inquired for the health of certain intimate friends, among whom he numbered the governor of the state, the mayor, and several aldermen, with their wives and daughters, winking and throwing his thumb over his left shoulder, in a manner which he assured Cheesy was a high point of etiquette in genteel circles. To a fourth, he said, in a mysterious whisper, loud enough for Cheesy to hear, that he would send a carriage for him at eleven o'clock that evening, and that he wanted him to have the short swords in readiness, and the pistols carefully loaded. After that,

the cross-eyed hinted darkly to his companion about a duel, until they arrived at Mr. Dabney's house.

"Don't you tell 'em I come with ye," he cried, running up the stone steps. "Wait here till somebody comes to the door. I'll ring for ye."

So saying, Jake, with a diabolical expression of mischief, jerked the bell-handle three times with all his might, and ran down the steps, laughing maliciously, and doubling Cheesy up with a blow in his stomach as he passed. The boy had scarce recovered himself when the door opened, and a young woman, with a scowl, demanded, angrily, if he meant to pull the house down, ringing in that way.

"I want ter see my Uncle Jesse," faltered Cheesy, in his bewilderment.

"Is it Mr. Dabney ye mean?" asked the young woman, sharply.

"Yes 'm," replied Cheesy.

As she withdrew, he passed into the hall, and awaited, with a cowardly sinking of the heart, the decision of his fate. Had the appearance of the house been plain and homely, he would not probably have experienced any lack of courage. But the handsome brick front, the stone steps, and the hall, with its showy walls and elegant stairs, had impressed him singularly. In all his life he had not dreamed of such magnificence. It seemed to him impossible that an uncle of his should be the proprietor of so grand a residence. And, even were that the case, he felt but faint hopes of being received and owned by that mighty branch of the Dabney family. He was anxiously thinking what he should say for himself, wondering how he could excuse his dirty, jacketless, guilty poverty, in the eyes of his uncle, when he heard foot-

steps approaching. It was a delicate, middle-aged lady, who came forward from the basement stairs, and regarded him with a look of amazement.

"What boy are you?" she asked, criticizing him from head to foot.

"Nobody's, — that is, ma's boy, — I mean," faltered Cheesy, shrinking miserably into the corner, "Uncle Jesse 's my uncle."

"Your uncle!" echoed the delicate lady, incredulously.

"Yes 'm — Uncle Jesse," returned Cheesy, rubbing his hands up and down his fustian trousers, and twisting one leg around the other in his embarrassment.

"What is your name, and where did you come from?" demanded the lady, a smile of kindly humor dawning upon the wonderment of her face.

Cheesy, beginning to cry, stammered forth imperfect answers to these questions, protesting that he never would have left home had it not been to escape death at the hands of his step-mother. The lady listened with interest, and seemed to soften a good deal towards the fugitive; but, before she could assure him of her protection, a third person, in dressing-gown and slippers, made his appearance on the scene. She immediately stepped aside in a deferential attitude, and the gentleman advanced, scowling at Cheesy in a manner which caused him to glance hurriedly around, with a view to dodging out of the door, and running for his life.

"Who is it rings in that fashion?" growled Mr. Dabney. "What boy is this? Who are you, sir, calling yourself my nephew?"

"Uncle Jesse — 't wan't me, — I mean, I did n't ring," began the terrified Cheesy.

"It was n't you? Who was it, then? Who is it calls me uncle? I have n't got a nephew in the world, that I know of."

"You had a brother Cheseboro', I have heard you say," suggested the lady, in a timid tone of voice.

"Well, I had; a fellow without energy or pride of any kind," said Mr. Dabney, devouring Cheesy with ferocious looks. "This is n't a son of his, is it?"

The boy regarded his aunt with a lugubrious, pleading face, as she repeated, in a gentle and conciliatory manner, the statement he had made concerning his individuality. His uncle's frown grew blacker; and, in utter dread and brokenness of spirit, Cheesy burst forth in a fit of weeping. This display of weakness did not much improve his appearance; still less did it soften his uncle's heart.

"This is pleasant!" said the latter, through his teeth. "You 're a pretty young gentleman to run away! What will become of you, do you think? But I 'll attend to your case, sir! I 'll have you sent home, this very day! Do you know where my store is?"

"I jes' come from there," blubbered Cheesy.

"Well, just go back again," said Mr. Jesse Dabney. "I 'll be down and attend to your business soon," — opening the door and pushing Cheesy out. "Be sure and come to the store. Your case shall be attended to, sir, depend upon it!"

The door was closed, and Cheesy found himself alone on the steps. He was crying drearily. But out of the cloud of his despair there shone ever so faint a ray of comfort. He would be sent back to his step-mother's. That was the worst that could happen. And, after the wretched experience he had had of city life, he felt that he would be content to return home, submit to

the chastisement that awaited him there, and spend the remainder of his days in the peaceful obscurity of his native village.

So Cheesy staggered away under the heavy burden of his woes. Yet his grief had not altogether silenced the demands of appetite. He was wondering whether his uncle would give him anything to eat before sending him home, when the train of thought which followed was suddenly thrown off the track by an obstacle, and dashed to pieces. That obstacle was the unforeseen impossibility of ever finding his way back to the store, amid the mazes through which he had been guided by the lad of oblique vision. He paused, checking his tears, and looked about him in an effort to rally all his energies for that trying moment. But, discerning no hope of help in his bitter necessity, he gave way once more, and uttered himself in sobs and lamentations.

Relief came when least expected. A young woman accosted him as he stood there, bemoaning his unhappy lot.

"What?" he drawled forth, looking over his sleeve, with a face contorted and oozy with sorrow. "Do ye want me?"

"Mrs. Dabney wants ye," replied the young woman.

Cheesy recognized her who had admitted him into the house, and his soul brightened. He set out to follow her with alacrity, recalling his aunt's benevolent countenance and kind tones, and rejoicing in the thought that deliverance from his trials was at hand. The young woman did not take him up the stone steps, but led the way through an arched passage which communicated with the rear of the house; and, while Cheesy was still wondering what was going to be done with him, he found himself in Mrs. Dabney's kitchen.

That lady met him at the door, and received him kindly, asking him to sit down, stop crying, and tell her the whole story. Her

goodness only made him cry the more freely, out of gratitude; but in a little while he managed to control his feelings, and commenced a rather confused and disconnected narrative of his adventures, frequently interrupted by the passage of his sleeve over his face.

"Then you have n't had any breakfast?" said Mrs. Dabney, viewing Cheesy's pitiful plight with pleasant humor, tempered with compassion.

"No 'm; I han't eat nothing since yes'day noon, nuther, 'cept an apple," replied the wretched Cheesy.

"Maria," resumed Mrs. Dabney, addressing the cook, "make haste and get a little breakfast for the poor boy. Use this table. Hannah,"— to the young woman who had brought him in,— "go up and tell Miss Sophronia that I have got something for her down here. Not a word in presence of Mr. Dabney, you know."

She then prepared a basin of water, with towels, at the sink, and invited Cheesy to wash himself. There was certainly need enough of this little ceremony, and the boy went through with it readily, using great deliberation and a large quantity of soap. His appearance received marked improvement thereby, and he began to look quite bright and handsome, comparatively speaking, although his eyes were still red, and streaks of dirt, scarcely touched by soap and water, shaded the side of his nose, and lay along the borders of his hair.

Cheesy was rubbing his face very hard with both hands, when Sophronia made her appearance, and Mrs. Dabney, laughing, introduced her as his cousin. Sophronia — a lively young girl of seventeen, with a fair complexion and merry blue eyes — regarded Cheesy with a momentary expression of amazement and doubt,

CHEESY IS PROVIDED FOR. p. 122.

places. Yet he managed to make a comfortable repast; after

then burst into a gay peal of laughter. Cheesy, on the other hand, looked over the towel at Sophronia with an expression of wonder, completely dazzled and bewildered by the vision of beauty which flashed so unexpectedly upon him.

"How do you do, Cheseboro'?" said Sophronia, recovering herself, and offering to shake hands.

"Perty well, thank ye; how do yeou do?" stammered Cheesy, grinning, turning awkwardly, and rubbing his hand first on the towel, then up and down his pantaloons, to prepare it for the honor his brilliant cousin condescended to confer upon it.

Sophronia said she was very well and glad to see him, at the same time casting a curious, gleeful glance at her mother, which said, quite plainly, "Who is this funny being, and where did he come from?"

In reply to this silent appeal, Mrs. Dabney repeated what she had gathered of Cheesy's adventures, adding that there was no mistake but he was indeed her cousin. Sophronia laughed at every trifling incident in the description, and seemed to regard him as the most amusing curiosity in the world.

Cheesy regarded her as the most wonderful. Her bright blue eyes made him feel strangely uncomfortable, yet he could not help looking at them. Of the beautiful Lillifoo, in Martin's great Romance, he had formed a high opinion; but that ideal bore no comparison with the real charms of his cousin Sophronia. He wished her away, however, when he sat down to eat the chop and drink the cup of coffee Maria had prepared for him,— she made him feel so ill at ease; and, for the first time, he experienced all the inconvenience and awkwardness of appearing in society in his shirt-sleeves, and with his tight fustians bursting open in divers places. Yet he managed to make a comfortable repast; after

which Mrs. Dabney gave him a silk waistcoat and a handsome frock-coat to put on, having been to search for those articles while Sophronia entertained him at table.

The waistcoat was so very long, and the coat so very large, that Sophronia laughed more heartily than ever at Cheesy, after he had got them on. The contrast between these garments and his soiled cotton shirt and pinching trousers was ludicrous in the extreme. Even Mrs. Dabney, who had been chiding her daughter all along, in her mild manner, for being so rude, gave way to an uncontrollable fit of mirth, and laughed with tears in her eyes. Cheesy, who was delighted with his new dress, expressed his gratification by holding his arms out stiffly from his side, and grinning at himself as he turned around for the criticism of his fair friends.

"I wish I wan't going back," he observed, at length, a shadow crossing his face. "I shall hate ter, the wust way. Say, now, would n't it be a good plan for me to git inter some business; now I 'm here?"

It was so absurd to think of Cheesy's finding employment in that ludicrous plight, that Sophronia and her mother joined in another fit of laughter at his expense. Yet Mrs. Dabney had deeper feelings awakened within her for the boy.

"I will see what can be done," said she, in her usually mild and pleasant way. "You shall stay with us until Monday, at all events, and make a visit. You must have a clean shirt to put on, the first thing, and I will try to find some clothes that will fit you better than these appear to. Sophronia, see if your father is going out soon. I shall not dare take Cheseboro' up stairs while he is in the house."

With a countenance beaming with pleasure and hope, the

admiring Cheesy watched his bright cousin as she went dancing out of the room; then, wrapping the wide lapels and skirts of the frock-coat about him, he looked at himself all down in front and over his shoulder, and chuckled with irrepressible glee at his unexpected good fortune.

XI.

THE PROGRESS OF MARTIN.

THE popular notion is that there exists a natural affinity between authorship and debt. Hence writers are supposed to be generally familiar with duns. They are also supposed not only to be serenely indifferent to all pecuniary embarrassments whatever, but to feel a sort of reckless exultation in the thought of owing a great many people, whom it is utterly impossible that they can ever pay, in the course of human events.

The popular notion may do a "large and respectable class of persons," as the phrase is, great injustice. This is not a place, however, for the discussion of the point. Our business is not with authors in general, but with the author of "The Beggar of Bagdad" in especial; and of him it may be

inexperience favored the play of those fine feelings which every person may indeed possess, even authors, until contact with the world renders them callous and blunt.

However this may be, he suffered keenly from the indignity of being dunned by Mr. Wormlett. His pride had received a sharp wound. He, a man of genius, an idealist of rare powers, author of "The Beggar of Bagdad," and several poems which had been popular in local newspapers, — a prose-poet, who aimed to be nothing less than a Shelley and a Scott combined, — to be dunned for a week's board! It was a maddening thought. Yet he derived some consolation from the reflection that many of the most exalted geniuses, celebrated in literature, had been oppressed by circumstances before him, and driven to meaner extremes than anything he had yet experienced. It was also a satisfaction to feel that in a little while that grateful individual, "The Beggar of Bagdad," whom he had borne so faithfully upon his back, would in turn take him up and elevate him gloriously to fame and fortune.

Martin walked the streets in a hot and nervous state for some two hours, revolving in his mind what was to be done. How bitterly he regretted not having suggested to his publisher in the morning that fifty or a hundred dollars advanced on the Romance would be acceptable! But he was too proud to return to him now, and money — the paltry sum of four dollars and a half — was to be raised in some other way. He had a watch, — a valu-

he might have been seen, about the middle of the afternoon, entering a shop, above the door of which hung the pawnbroker's symbol of three golden balls.

Martin produced his watch, and handed it over the counter, with a gesture of indifference. The proprietor of the establishment — the same who had dealt with Caleb Thorne in the morning — received it with the same cool business air with which he had examined the poor articles of apparel belonging to blind Alice and her father.

"What do you expect to raise on this?" he asked, shutting up the watch, after criticizing its works, and holding it to his ear.

"Anything you please," replied Martin, feeling independent in the thought that in a few days the Beggar of Bagdad would come to his relief.

"I can let you have seven dollars on it, if that is any satisfaction," returned the pawnbroker.

"Seven dollars!" echoed Martin, with an incredulous laugh. "I've been offered twenty-five and thirty dollars for it, a dozen times."

"You should know better than to bring it here, if that's the case. We often get these kind of watches for five dollars, when a man's hard up, and must raise money."

"I take it, then, if I had had the appearance of being 'hard up,'" laughed Martin, sarcastically, "you would have offered me only five dollars, instead of seven. Well, I like that. That's business, I suppose."

"That's a fact," answered the pawnbroker, evidently flattered, holding the watch to his ear once more. "You appear to know a thing or two; all the better for you. I don't know but I'll say eight dollars."

"Very well; I should have been just as well satisfied with seven; but eight won't come amiss."

Martin whistled a pleasant air while the proprietor of the place was numbering the article and making out a check for its owner; then left the shop in quite lively spirits, with a happy consciousness of eight dollars in his pocket, — not as Caleb Thorne had left it, after pawning his child's clothes with his own, a few hours before.

The first thing Martin did was to find Mr. Wormlett in his store, and put into his hands the sum of four dollars and a half.

"That 's what I call a demonstration of principle," observed that profound intellect, with an approving nod and a complacent smile. "I thought all along you 'd turn out right, and I 'm glad, — I 'm delighted," he added, jerking his head back with an air of importance, and laying his hand on Martin's shoulder, — "I may say I 'm gratified to see you toe the mark in this here handsome way. You 're a little flighty yet; you han't settled down on fixed and solid principles, I don't think. You han't seen quite enough of the world for that; but you 're doing very well, very well indeed. You did n't feel hurt, neither, at what I said to you at noon, did ye?"

"Hurt? O, no!" said Martin, with a peculiar smile. "I think I was rather pleased by the highly practical suggestions you threw out for my benefit."

"That 's the sperrit! — that 's manly and upright, that 's the way I like to be understood," exclaimed Mr. Wormlett. "Simeon, my son, did you hear that?"

Simeon, who was learning to count money at the change-drawer, wriggled, grinned, and said yes, with his tongue out, and his chin making the acquaintance of his shoulder.

"Then remember it, Simeon," resumed his father, jerking himself into his favorite attitude for delivering those beautiful moral precepts for which he was famous. "Never let such examples fall to the ground, my son; treasure 'em up, and improve by 'em in after years. Fools take offence at the words of experience, but the wise profit thereby. Remember that, my son, the longest day of your life."

Martin bought some oranges for Alice, and returned with them to the boarding-house, leaving Mr. Wormlett still preaching to his hopeful son, while the latter writhed and twisted, as if so much moral food distressed him, and he could think of no relief short of unscrewing his neck and taking it off his shoulders.

"Is that Mr. Merrivale?" asked a voice from the kitchen, as Martin was running up stairs.

He acknowledged his identity, and, looking over the banisters, saw Mrs. Wormlett coming after him, with hands thick-covered with dough.

"There 's been some persons here to see you, Mr. Merrivale."

"To see me!"

"A couple of ladies, about ten minutes ago," said Mrs. Wormlett. "They wanted to know when you would be in, and said they would call again in an hour."

"A couple of ladies!" queried the young romancer. "I think there must be some mistake. They could not have meant to ask for me."

"Yes, they did. They inquired for Mr. Merrivale, a young author, who arrived in town last night."

"That is strange!" murmured Martin. "Did they leave their names?"

"No; I did n't think to ask them," replied Mrs. Wormlett.

"The one that did the talking was fashionably dressed, wore curls, and was really quite handsome."

"How old?" Martin desired to know. Mrs. Wormlett could not tell, but she considered her a young lady, decidedly; perhaps not over twenty. Of her companion she could give no description, from the mere glimpse she had had of her at the door. Having imparted this agreeable information, Mrs. Wormlett retired to the kitchen, while Martin went up stairs, perplexing his brain with the problem of the mysterious ladies. He formed a number of conjectures concerning them, but only one seemed at all probable. They were noble-souled women, whose admiration for genius was a river that swept away all artificial embankments of etiquette and form. They had called to welcome him to Boston. A trifling objection to this theory, however, arose in Martin's mind. How had his fame reached them? How did they know that his name was Merrivale, and that he had written The Beggar of Bagdad? It was quite possible that the publisher to whom the manuscript had been submitted had discovered its merits, and noised the fame thereof abroad in literary circles. But Martin had neglected to give the publisher his address. And so the visit of the unknown ladies remained as profound a mystery as before.

Martin found Alice sitting by the window of his room. Tears were in her eyes, but her face brightened when she heard his steps, and, as he stooped to kiss her, she placed her arms about his neck.

"What have you been thinking of, Alice?" he asked, in kindly tones.

"I have been thinking of so many things!" she exclaimed, in a subdued voice. "I have been thinking of you, and of my poor father," she added, weeping, "and of my mother who went

away from us at this time of year, when the leaves were falling. I can't help crying — I wish I could; but it is all so sad, so sad!"

Martin called her his poor child, and took her head upon his bosom, letting her weep there until the flow of sorrow was spent.

"Did you ever have a mother?" she inquired, after a long silence.

"That is a strange question," replied Martin, with a darkening of the brow the blind girl could not see.

"Of course you had a mother," she added, with a gentle smile. "But do you remember her?"

"No, I do not. I never knew a mother's love, I never felt a mother's tender care. Dear Alice," — Martin's voice trembled with emotion, — "I have been an orphan, — a neglected, scorned, unloved, unguided orphan, all my days."

"Not unloved, — not unloved!" said Alice, embracing him with eager affection. "Everybody loves you — everybody feels drawn to you by the tones of your voice; is it not so?"

"You judge others by your own pure and affectionate little heart, my child. Yet," said the young man, his features lighting up with a smile not altogether free from bitterness, "there are those who have felt an interest in me; who have loved me as the world loves, — not as mothers love their children, not as my soul demands to be loved. The cross you saw me carry in your dream has its meaning, Alice."

"I felt it!" murmured the child. "And do you know I saw it again this afternoon? That is why I asked if you remembered your mother."

"What had she to do with the cross?" asked Martin, breathlessly.

"You seemed to be a little baby, playing upon a carpet," said Alice. "You were such a pretty child! And your mother — she was — O, so beautiful! But she was very sad. She was placing a crucifix, tied by a ribbon, on your neck; and, as she bent over you, she turned away her face, as if it almost broke her heart to do what she was doing, and her hand covered her eyes, so that she might not see. When she took away her hand, I saw that her face was all wet with tears; but the child pulled the ribbon, and shook the crucifix, and looked up in her face with a joyous laugh, which only made her cry the more. Then a tall, dark man came and took the baby from her. It seemed so cruel! for, when he went away, she fell down and lay with her face upon the floor, as if she was dead, until another man came and knelt by her side, and lifted her up and kissed her."

"What more did you see?" asked Martin, with eager interest, as Alice paused.

"The woman and her friend prayed together; and, as they prayed, some angels came down to them, — the brightest angels I ever saw. They wore bands of gold around their foreheads, and in the bands there were diamonds sparkling and burning. The diamonds were arranged to form letters, which made a word on each of the bands of gold. One was LOVE, another HOPE, another FAITH, and another TRUTH; and these seemed to be the names of the angels. They put a crown on the poor mother's head, and another on the head of her friend; and these two — although they could not see what was done to them — arose from their knees, and began to sing sweetly, while the angels above them sang too. The last I saw of them, they were walking together along a path all covered with briers, while a gay little

company of cherubs danced before them, breaking off all the thorns, and leaving only roses and green leaves for them to tread upon."

When Alice finished, Martin was shivering from head to foot, with a thrilling sense of beauty, and wonder, and awe. Perhaps the child's vision was in itself nothing. But the simple narrative falling from her lips; the singular aptness of certain things she described, which Martin recognized as almost prophetic in his case; the unstudied, spontaneous flow of imagery and words, so remarkable in a child of her years; these circumstances combined to impress him strangely, and give the dream, or vision, or whatever it might be named, a power to move his soul as it had rarely been moved in all the experience of his life.

Martin's thoughts were so absorbed in what the child had been saying, that he had quite forgotten the mysterious ladies. But the ringing of the door-bell recalled them to mind. Instantly his curiosity returned with a keener edge than ever, and his heart swelled with expectation. He opened the chamber-door, and, listening on the landing, heard a silvery voice inquire if Mr. Merrivale had come in. A minute later, quite nervous with anxiety, he went down to the door, to speak with the mysterious ladies, at their request.

The young romancer colored up to his eyes on finding himself face to face with an arch, merry, blue-eyed little beauty, who asked, with a charming coquettish air, if she had the honor of speaking to Mr. Merrivale.

"That is my name," replied Martin, quite bewildered.

"I 've had such a time hunting you up!" exclaimed the blue-eyed, with vivacity. "Then, when I found where you lived, you were not in. But, now that I have the honor —" the blue-eyed curtseyed with a droll expression of fun, covered by a thin veil of

politeness — " of — of addressing Mr. Merrivale, the author — Excuse me, but I 'm all out of breath."

"That is certainly my name," said Martin, a good deal confused. "But I was not before aware that any person in Boston ever so much as heard of me. I think there must be some pleasantry connected with all this," he added, perceiving that the blue-eyed was smothering with merriment, "and should be glad to enjoy the joke with you."

"It is so comical!" cried the young lady, laughing without restraint. "You should have seen his odd figure when he came to our house."

"When he came? I am not aware what person you are speaking of."

"Why, of my country cousin, — of Cheseboro' Dabney. He said you would know all about it, if I said '*Cheesy*' to you, that being the name he goes by."

"Cheesy! Cheesy come to light!" exclaimed Martin, pleased with the intelligence, but disappointed in the romance of the adventure. "I 'm glad to hear it. He has found his Uncle Jesse then?"

Thereupon Miss Dabney threw wide open the flood-gates of speech, and poured forth a stream of words, which amused, astonished and overwhelmed, the modest young romancer. She gave a capital account of Cheesy's arrival, with a witty description of his appearance and manners; related what had been done for him by herself and mother, without Mr. Dabney's knowledge, and finished by inviting Martin to call in the evening to see the boy, and consult with his aunt about his forlorn and unhappy condition. Martin readily promised to do so; and, having brought down Cheesy's property for Hannah, Miss Dabney's companion, to carry

away with her, took leave of the blue-eyed with many expressions of polite regard on both sides.

After tea, Martin left Alice in the care of Miss Tomes and Eliza, and went out to fulfil his engagement. He found Mr. Dabney's residence without much difficulty; was admitted to a private room, where he enjoyed an affecting scene on meeting with his young and innocent friend Cheesy; became acquainted with Mrs Dabney, whom he liked very much, and whom he managed to please in a high degree; commenced a wild and desperate flirtation with Miss Sophronia, who showed alarming symptoms of falling in love; and went home elated with the adventure, having promised to repeat his visit on an early occasion.

XII.

RAIN.

EDNESDAY, of the ensuing week, was a dreary autumn day. One of those dismal east winds for which Boston is noted blew up mist and rain and cold weather from the melancholy sea, saturating the city, penetrating the warmest garments and the closest walls, and souring the tempers of some of the best Christian-people, whose cheerful piety might have been proof against every other species of earthly tribulation.

There were two individuals, however, whose philosophical good humor received but little prejudice from the storm. They were room-mates in Mr. Wormlett's house, — Mr. Toplink and the author of The Beggar of Bagdad. Of their companion, Mr. Leviston, we would gladly say as much; but the truth is — we confess it with disapprobation and regret — the foul weather that morning, after provoking him to utter a deep oath from his pillow on awaking, had covered him — so to speak — with a gloomy and impenetrable cloak of silence for the remainder of the day.

"Have you got to go down town, this morning?" asked Mr. Toplink, as Martin entered the chamber after breakfast.

"Yes," replied Martin. His heart swelled at the thought of the Beggar of Bagdad, whose fate was that day to be decided. "I shall go down in about an hour."

"I shall have to start off in a little while, I suppose," observed Mr. Toplink, pulling on his boots. "I — de-clare," — yawning, — "I 'm later than ever, this morning. Never mind. I don't care for breakfast. O dear! what a storm! I rather like such weather once in a while, though; don't you?"

Martin looked thoughtfully out of the window, and answered, Yes, he did not object to it occasionally. All the time, however, he was contrasting that wretched morning with the warm and sunny mornings that had preceded it, and wondering if it was really to be considered as a bad omen. For it had seemed to him that, to grace the triumph of his Romance, that day should have been the brightest of the month — a golden sheaf to cap the yellow bundles Time had of late been binding up in the ripe October harvest.

"I 'd like to lie abed, such mornings, till about ten o'clock," resumed Mr. Toplink, tying his cravat before the broken looking-glass; "then play whist till dinner-time, with a good company, — with almost anybody, in fact, but Leviston and Tomes. How Leviston did swear, though, this morning!" he added, chuckling at the recollection. "I 'm glad I happened to be awake, for I would n't have lost it for the world. You heard him, did n't you?"

Mr. Toplink became convulsed with laughter, when Martin confessed to having overheard their room-mate's improper remarks.

"It always tickles me to hear Leviston swear," he resumed, sitting down on one of the beds, in order to enjoy the reminiscence

at his ease; "his oaths are so deep and hearty! Do you remember the precise words he used? I was half asleep; but I believe it was something about a great number of fiends breaking loose. I wish I could think just how he expressed it. The only thing can make him rip out in that way is the weather; he feels it in his bones, he says."

Mr. Toplink was running on in this good-natured way, when Martin interrupted him to ask if he could lend him an umbrella.

"I han't got but one; but I'll tell you how we can fix it," replied the accommodating Mr. Toplink. "If you'll walk with me to the store, then you can have my umbrella to use all the forenoon, if you like. Don't ye want an overcoat too? I've got one I can let you take; 't an't a very genteel one, though, I'd have you understand."

He produced a shaggy garment, very short and very tight in the waist, and begged of Martin to make as free use of it as if it were his own.

"It makes me look like a bear, don't it?" asked the latter, trying it on.

"It's a capital fit," laughed Mr. Toplink. "Turn around. That cut was all the rage two years ago. You don't like it? Well, I'll wear it, and you may take my best one. I'd just as lives you would. Try this one."

Declining to accept his friend's generous offer, Martin declared himself perfectly satisfied with the shaggy surtout.

"Now, if you would any rather wear this," insisted Mr. Toplink, "it's the same thing to me, precisely. Can't I lend you a hat? Don't think I'm meddlesome; but I should like to accommodate you with anything I've got in the way of hats and caps."

Martin had just been thinking that his old white hat would

look quite ridiculous that cold, stormy day; and, accepting the proposition with thanks, he began to examine a small pile of the aforesaid articles which his companion took down from the top-shelf of the closet and dusted for the occasion. Unfortunately, he could find nothing to suit his size; the largest article worn by Mr. Toplink being of such narrow proportions that it would have fitted the crown of his head quite as well had it been a solid block, instead of a hollow cylinder.

"That 's too bad, I declare," said Mr. Toplink, convulsed with laughter. "But here 's something that 'll fit you, I know."

"It 's just my size," replied Martin. "How happens it? Can you wear it?"

Placing the hat as he spoke on Mr. Toplink's head, he had the pleasure of seeing it shut down over that slim young gentleman's eyes in a manner which startled him.

"It 's Leviston's hat — this is," said the delighted Toplink, as soon as he could speak distinctly. "But you can wear it, all the same. I 'll be responsible for lending it. Leviston knows me. I often use his things without asking."

"I am afraid, however, I could n't feel comfortable in a hat borrowed without leave," replied Martin; "so I think I 'll try to content myself with my own."

After Mr. Toplink had swallowed a cup of cold coffee, and labored for some minutes on a slice of tough steak at the breakfast-table, the two left the house together. Through the raw wind and drizzling rain they walked to Mr. Toplink's place of business, where that cheerful young man kept his companion standing on the sidewalk, in the storm, for a quarter of an hour, while he finished a pleasant story touching a love affair between Miss Tomes and a widower, with nine children in want of a

mother. Having concluded, and expressed a conscientious hope that he had said nothing to prejudice Martin against any person in the world, he dismissed him, with the umbrella, and went laughing into the store.

Mr. Toplink, who doubtless flattered himself that he had afforded his companion a rare entertainment, remembered the occasion with a satisfaction which lasted him all the forenoon. Not so Martin. With his mind absorbed in other things, he had scarce comprehended a word of the conversation, — pretending to listen, and submitting to the discomfort of standing in the storm, simply because — Mr. Toplink's surtout being on his back, and his umbrella over his head — he had not the heart to take leave in a manly way of that good-natured bore: a fact of which he felt heartily ashamed, even while indulging in that natural human weakness.

But Mr. Toplink, Miss Tomes and the widower with nine children, were speedily banished from his mind. After a rapid walk of a few minutes, he found himself at the door of the publishing-house to which The Beggar of Bagdad had been intrusted; and, with a swelling heart, he closed his umbrella, paused to gather breath, arranged his shirt-collar, and entered. As he passed through the sales-room towards the publisher's desk, he was conscious of exciting a degree of interest in the clerks, who eyed him in silence; but, whether they recognized him as the author of the great Oriental Romance, or simply regarded him as the wearer of a shaggy black surtout, and a shabby white hat, he could not guess.

It was somehow a relief to Martin to learn that the publisher was not in. High as his hopes were, he could not but feel a certain dread of the crisis which was to decide his literary destiny; and

he was not sorry to have it postponed still an hour. Yet no sooner was he in the street than an unhappy feeling of suspense came over him, such as he had not experienced before; and he heartily wished that the final ordeal was passed, whatever the result might be.

With a heavy hour before him, Martin spread his umbrella and walked mechanically up the street. Before he was aware in what direction he was going, he had wandered around by the Common, where, during the pleasant weather of the past few days, he had spent so many happy hours with his blind companion, Alice Thorne. Having passed the iron gates, he paused, raising his eyes to the cold desolation of the scene. He shuddered at the change which time in so brief a space had wrought. The soft October sky, the golden sunshine, the blue haze sleeping on the air, the flushed foliage, and the shadows of the branching elms lying like grotesque tracery upon the yellow paths,—all had been swept away. The heavens were lowering and watery; the heavy mist hung gloomily over the hill-side slopes, where everything had seemed so warm and pleasant during the sunny days that were gone; and the shivering trees strewed the ground with cold, wet, faded and melancholy leaves. The scene was picturesque enough, and at any other time Martin would have enjoyed it with the eye of a poet; but somehow he could not help connecting it with the fate of the Beggar of Bagdad; and, as he stood gazing out upon it from the shelter of Mr. Toplink's umbrella, the same miserable feeling of suspense, which he had experienced on leaving the bookstore, weighed heavily upon his heart.

Discovering, by reference to the clock on Park-street church, that he had still three-quarters of an hour to drag through, he bethought him of a promise he had made to visit his young friend

Cheesy in his new situation, obtained for him through the influence of Mrs. Jesse Dabney. Martin called at the store, — a wholesale establishment in Pearl-street, — and the boy, who was hard at work up stairs at the time, was sent for to come down and meet him. He had not long to wait, for presently his promising young friend made his appearance, in his shirt-sleeves, grinning, and rubbing his hands on his trousers, with a consciousness of greenness in his novel employment.

"Well, Cheesy, how do you get along?" asked Martin, smiling good-humoredly.

"Perty well," replied Cheesy, in his coarsest tones, with a large display of teeth. "I begun here this morning, and like it fust-rate."

"Have you got a boarding-place?"

"Yes, up in High-street; I don't like that much, though. They're mean folks, and I can't never feel to hum there, I'm sure. I wish Aunt Dabney could a took me to board."

"Does your uncle know where you are?" asked Martin.

"That's the thing on't," said Cheesy, tittering nervously. "He don' know where I be, more 'n nothing; S'phrony said he did n't. Have you seen her?"

"I met her in the street yesterday."

"Did you, though? She likes you fust-rate; I heard her tell her mother she did. An't she re'l perty?"

"Hush!" said Martin, coloring. "Don't speak so loud."

"I forgot," replied Cheesy, looking around. "Did n't nobody hear, though. Say, Mr. Mer'vale, what d' ye s'pose the old woman thinks has 'come of me?"

"She is probably lamenting for you as for the dead, poor woman! Now, would n't you really like to see her, Cheesy?"

"I don' know. She 'd be glad enough to lay hands on me; I bet she won't, though, yit a while. I would like to see her, come to think, fust-rate, jest long enough to tell her I 've got a place, and would n't go hum agin to live for fifty dollars,— no, nor for twice that, nuther."

Cheesy looked proud and triumphant. He was quite a different being from the miserable, disheartened lad, who, alone and lost in the wide city, appealed to his Uncle Jesse for protection four mornings ago. His watch-house friends would hardly have recognized him. Even Jake, the youth of oblique vision, would have been astonished to observe so much spirit in his late meek and submissive victim.

"I like that," said Martin, laughing. "As long as you keep up courage you will do well, my brave Cheesy! But, if you get home-sick, let me know, and I 'll have you sent back to your step-mother."

Cheesy shook his head knowingly, stiffened his upper-lip, and giggled.

"Don't go yit," said he, as Martin was about to take his leave. "There 's lots o' things I want to tell ye. Have you found Mr. Thorne?"

"Not yet, but I hope to hear from him in a day or two. After what you told me, I thought the best way would be to apply to the police for information, and I have the promise of being notified when Caleb turns up."

"You don't keep the girl with you yit, do ye?"

"To be sure, I do. She is a wonderful child, Cheesy, and I 'm getting quite fond of her."

"Don't go," pleaded Cheesy. "I han't half begun to talk yit.

Say, what is 't about your Romance; I want to read that 'ere last chapter, the wust way. Is it printed?"

"I 'm on my way to see about having it printed," replied Martin, shaking out his umbrella.

With glistening eyes Checsy saw his old friend depart, and returned slowly up stairs to his work, chuckling fitfully, and brushing his face with his sleeve, as if undecided whether to laugh or cry.

Discovering, to his distress, that he had still a dreary half-hour on his hands that he did not know how to dispose of, Martin began to wander listlessly about in the rain. At length he stopped to look at a collection of pictures displayed in a shop-window, the most life-like and remarkable of which was a young man about his size, in a shaggy surtout and a shabby hat, standing under a wet umbrella. He was at first startled by the striking resemblance the figure bore to himself; but, perceiving that he was only looking in a mirror, he smiled with melancholy pleasantry, pulled up his limp dickey with his humid fingers, and practised a bow for his publisher.

As he was on the point of turning away, the mirror reflected a scene which riveted his attention. Two men, who had met on the walk and shaken hands, retired to the shop-window to converse. One, having closed his umbrella, held it down by his side, while the other — a fine-looking, middle-aged man, of spirited deportment — held his over both their heads. The side-face of the latter, reflected, met Martin's eye; and instantly a qualm smote his heart, his own face whitened suddenly in the glass, then flushed purple, and a tremor of agitation weakened his limbs. The shock was but momentary, however, and, rallying at once, he stood watching, with a quick-leaping heart, those remarkable features,

the unexpected appearance of which had occasioned such a phenomenon of colors in his own.

Martin was not at all ambitious of being recognized by his neighbor; he therefore quietly lowered his umbrella, turned from the window, and — still with conflicting emotions in his breast — walked deliberately away. He had scarce taken three steps, however, when, hearing a voice, and feeling a touch on his shoulder, he stopped, looked around, and stood face to face with the man whose presence had troubled him so strangely. The latter was making some inquiry concerning a street he wished to find; but, recognizing Martin in turn, he started with surprise, and broke off abruptly in the midst of his sentence.

"I am a stranger in town," observed the young man, affecting great coolness. "I am unable to answer your question."

He bowed politely, but his face was very pale and white, and there was a passionate fire in his eye. Still looking steadily at the other face, he was turning once more to go, when the gentleman said, with a smile, extending his hand,

"I don't think I 'm mistaken, although I could at first hardly believe the evidence of my senses. How do you do, Martin?"

"I am quite well," replied Martin, promptly. "A stormy day, sir. I — I hope you are well, sir. Good-morning."

"Ah, my boy! this will never do," said the other, holding his hand. "You have avoided me long enough."

"No, sir, not quite," returned Martin, quickly. "I am sure," — his voice quivered, — "I am sure that any further intercourse between us will only be a source of annoyance to both."

"How you have misunderstood me, Martin!" resumed the other, in a sad and pitying tone. "I must have a little conversation with you, now that we have met, so providentially, it seems to me."

Taking leave of his friend, who had been waiting during this time, he stepped under Martin's umbrella, and drew him back to the shop-window.

"As you please," murmured the young man, with a dissatisfied air. "If you insist on talking to me, I must hear."

"You think you hate me, I presume," replied his friend, good-humoredly, but with deep feeling in his tones.

"No, sir, I do not. I hate no man. But you have done me wrong, sir; and when I think of your unjust treatment, I feel something in my breast not over and above pleasant — something rather bitter and burning," said Martin, struggling to preserve a calm exterior. "You certainly do not wonder at that."

"I certainly do, my dear boy. Have I not always taken a lively interest in your welfare?"

"You have appeared to, I confess. And I am indebted to you for many kindnesses, which I shall never forget."

"Could you not, then, believe me, when I averred that the very treatment of which you complain was instigated by motives of love?"

"I could never believe, I never can believe," cried Martin, "that such treatment was dictated by motives of love alone. I think I have discovered a vein of policy running through the pure marble of your intentions."

"Policy?" echoed the other, smiling still, but with a darkening of the face the while.

"I said policy. I came near using a less polite word," answered the impetuous Martin. "Supposing I had spoken of selfishness and falsehood? But I did not. Policy is the word I chose to employ in this connection, and I hope you will not take offence."

"You are bitter enough, I must confess," said his friend, smil-

ing still, but with his features darkening more and more. "I am sorry, for your sake. I hoped, on meeting you just now, that we should come to an understanding, — that you would return to the position you once occupied towards me."

"To the position of a dependant, — of a cringing coward, — of a miserable dupe? Excuse me," said Martin, his voice failing him, and tears of passion rushing to his eyes; "but it is my way to speak as I feel. You have been more than kind to me in many things; you have been rather a father than an uncle."

His voice became quite choked, and he began to fumble hurriedly in Mr. Toplink's coat-pocket for his handkerchief. The shadow of displeasure passed from the face of his friend, the smile on the firm lip brightened, and those dark, searching eyes beamed with unwonted emotion.

"My arms are open still," said the latter; "my heart is open still. And I can assure you that you shall never have cause to complain of illiberality, if you will accept of it on the easy terms I propose. I will continue to be rather a father than an uncle to you — as I am indeed at heart."

"It is not of much use to talk," returned Martin. "You are in possession of secrets which I have a right to know; and, as long as you refuse my claim to them, treating me as a child, I cannot accept of your bounty. I 'd rather dig in the dirt of poverty with these hands, unaided and friendless as I am, all my days, than submit to the degradation of mind which I must feel if I become the pliable tool you would make me."

"You are rash and foolish; I cannot help saying so, Martin."

"Perhaps I am; but such is my nature, and I 'll be true to it. I want your love, I want your confidence, I want your respect; but your money alone I do not want!"

"You have my love, my confidence, my respect, — except when you conduct yourself in this headstrong manner. I feel no stronger ties of affection for my own children than I do for you."

The uncle spoke in fervent, earnest tones; but Martin's lip curled incredulously, and there was bitterness in the manner of his reply.

"Your affection is something a little out of the common course of events, it seems to me. At least, it manifests itself oddly. It is uncertain and spasmodic, I cannot help thinking. Why, sir," cried Martin, bursting forth, "you have loved me, if at all, as you would love a thing you were afraid of! You have held me at arms-length, as if I were a viper. The ties you speak of must be exceedingly fine and elastic, to extend over the space which you have been careful to keep between you and me. You love me across a gulf, and I must rest content to stand on the other bank, and receive the trifles you toss me. Your arms and heart are open — at a distance."

"You complain because I have not taken you into my family," said the uncle, with a troubled look. "I did not expect this from you. Have I not sufficiently explained the domestic circumstances which shut you out?"

"You misunderstand me. I do not wish to enter your family. I should be sorry to have any fond mother made jealous on my account. You do well to hold me off, I doubt not; but you hold me from your heart at the same time; and so I feel that I am accepting alms when you bestow your benefits."

"There is spirit in you which I like, Martin. But you carry your scruples to extremes."

"Very likely; that 's characteristic of my faulty nature, I suppose. I wonder," said Martin, looking full in his uncle's face,

"I really wonder what sort of a man my father was. I think I must be like him."

"In some respects you are," said his uncle, returning the look with a steady gaze.

"If I ever had a father!" added Martin, quickly. He looked down and gnawed his lip, his spirit beginning to chafe within him again, like a bird tearing its plumage and beating its bare neck against the bars of its cage. "This is torture!" he muttered, after a pause, turning away his face. "You are right when you call me rash and foolish. Rash and foolish I was, indeed, when the whim entered my head to spend a vacation in visiting the place where my parents were said to have passed their obscure lives. What possible good could it do me to hunt up old friends of theirs, in order to learn something more about them than you could tell me? Why should I take an interest in a father I never knew? Why should I feel such a yearning to gather up every trifling circumstance connected with a mother whose smiles — if she ever had any for me — were forgotten in my childhood? I was certainly rash and foolish; for that mad excursion cost me all my peace of mind, overthrew my confidence in you, filled me with doubts about my birth, dashed to dust the pretty little picture of my parentage, you had so kindly painted to divert my boyish mind from more serious searches for the truth."

Martin fixed his burning eyes once more upon his uncle's, and kept them there, until the latter passed his hand before his face, to veil his feelings and collect his thoughts.

"I still hope to satisfy you with regard to this matter, in a measure," the uncle answered, once more taking the young man's hand. "There are certain points which have always been a mystery, even to me; the rest I will explain fully. Come with me

to my hotel, and we will converse more freely, and more to your satisfaction, I do believe, than we have yet done. Will you come?"

"I am engaged, this forenoon," said Martin, briefly.

"Then come in the afternoon. You shall promise to do that before I let you go. I leave for home in the morning, and I don't know when we shall have another opportunity of this kind. I want to learn what you have been doing of late, what occupies you here in town, and all about you."

The uncle spoke in a cheerful, cordial tone, which Martin could not resist. There was both authority and persuasion in it, — an influence such as only men of strong magnetic powers know how to use successfully; and, before they parted, the young man, contrary to his inclinations and his pride, had promised to meet his uncle at the Tremont House in the afternoon.

Once more alone, in the rainy street, he looked up at the Old South clock, and discovered, with a start, that the hour had arrived when the fate of the Beggar of Bagdad was to be decided.

XIII.

LITERARY PROSPECTS.

MARTIN found the publisher at his desk; but, perceiving that he was engaged, he was about to withdraw, when that representative of fate, giving him a careless nod, observed that he would be at leisure in a moment, and requested him to wait. So the young author, but little encouraged by the coolness of his reception, which certainly, he thought, augured no good to the Beggar of Bagdad, stepped aside, placed his wet umbrella in the corner, and warmed his fingers by the stove. From this position, affecting an air of unconcern, — while in reality his mind was quivering, like a jarred pendulum, betwixt his uncle and his Romance, — he witnessed a little scene which proved somewhat interesting. The publisher was dealing with a brother author. Their conversation was concerning a manuscript which lay open on the desk; and the author — a seedy individual, with a droning voice, and a mouth stained with tobacco — was laboring to convince the other that the work he offered him was the

most remarkable production of the age. Nothing like it had been attempted by an American writer. Its excellences distinguished every page. There was not a dull or superfluous paragraph, from first to last. In short, it was a work of extraordinary genius, and would make the fortunes of both author and publisher. Notwithstanding all these recommendations, the bookseller — who must have been exceedingly stupid, not to see the merits of so wonderful a composition — insisted on declining the author's proposals.

"I understand, then, that you do not wish to publish the work," observed the latter, with a look in which resentment, pity, disappointment and disgust, were blended

"That is my decision, sir."

"I think you will regret it. You must have formed some prejudice which biases your judgment, or you would not — "

"Good-morning, sir."

"You desire me, then, to take the manuscript away?" whined the author, intruding his tobacco-stained mouth before the publisher's face. "I think, if you would only consider —"

"I have considered and decided," said the publisher, turning away to avoid his breath.

Thereupon the author, with compressed lips, rolled up his manuscript in an awkward bundle, and slowly and reluctantly withdrew.

"A disagreeable day," observed the publisher, with a smile, as his visitor disappeared.

Martin said it was, very disagreeable; his heart beating violently, as he approached, and rested his hand upon the back of a vacant chair.

"I think you are the young man who left a manuscript with

me, last week?" queried the publisher, with an uncertain look. "Ah, yes! I remember. I knew I had seen you before."

He arose, opened a safe in the corner of the room, and took out the Beggar of Bagdad; while Martin, overwhelmed with a consciousness of his insignificance in the bookseller's eyes, awaited, with a fainting heart, the result of the interview.

"This is it, I believe — 'The Beggar of Bagdad.'"

"Yes, sir," said Martin, with an effort. "Have you had time to examine it?"

Discouraged by the aspect of affairs, he almost hoped for a negative reply. But, improbable as the circumstance may appear to those who have had similar dealings with the trade, the manuscript had received prompt attention.

"Our reader went over part of it — some forty pages, or so, I think he said," replied the publisher.

Martin observed, with affected pleasantry, that he must have been deeply interested to be able to read so far.

"He expressed himself much pleased," said the publisher.

"Indeed!" cried Martin, his soul brightening with sudden hope.

"He was of opinion, however, that the romance would hardly suit our purpose," resumed the bookseller, with stately politeness. "I am consequently under the necessity of returning it to you. Thank you, sir," extending the manuscript to its author.

The hope which had flamed up in Martin's breast was utterly extinguished. A deathly blackness followed, as he received the package, and began to arrange the ends of the wrapper, in a peculiarly careful and ingenious manner, with his unconscious fingers. His heart was in his throat, and it was some seconds before he could speak.

"I suppose," he said, at length, "that the style in many places may have been found a little loose."

"On the contrary, the style was considered rather too fine."

"Too fine! How can that be?"

"At the present time," was the reply, "high-wrought fictions are not in very great demand. The popular taste is for simple, natural pictures of life."

"Am I to infer," asked Martin, "that my style is considered unnatural and extravagant?"

"Rather too much so for our purpose. You deal a good deal in the marvellous — to which your style is well adapted, I have no doubt; but it would hardly be for our interest to publish a work of the kind. I presume, however, that you will readily find a publisher to your liking."

"One thing I would like to know," cried Martin, energetically. "Has the romance any merit at all?"

"I should judge so, sir. Our reader spoke favorably of the writer's poetic talent, which, with experience, might, he thought, be made available. He found considerable ingenuity displayed in the plot of the story, and decided that, should the author come down to real life, he would be quite successful."

"I am much obliged to you," said Martin, bowing very low.

"Not at all," replied his friend the publisher, turning to his papers in a manner to discourage further conversation.

Martin bowed again, and set out to depart; but paused at the door, and came back.

"Excuse me; but you spoke of other publishers. Have you any one in your mind who would — who would be likely to want such a manuscript? Excuse me for troubling you."

The publisher said it was no trouble, and readily directed

Martin to the shop of a brother publisher; upon which the grateful author humbly took his leave. He had reached the street and felt the cold rain smite his face, before discovering that he had left Mr. Toplink's umbrella behind him, — a circumstance which occasioned him much humiliation and shame. Having returned on that base errand, he set out once more to traverse the rainy streets, with the umbrella over his head, and the Beggar of Bagdad under his arm.

Martin had experienced heart-sickness before, but never so heavy an attack of that disease as now. The interview with his uncle, calling up so many unhappy associations of his past life, had rendered him peculiarly susceptible to depressing influences; and the stroke of disappointment had fallen on a feeble and defenceless head. Shattered and shaken, he staggered forth, without purpose, as without hope. In the city, which now appeared a mere chaos of meaningless confusion to his sick eyes, all things looked ghastly and strange. Dull, dead, sallow vapors of despair shrouded his senses, coloring every object, and muffling every sound. Only one idea assumed anything like distinctness in his brain. Overwhelmed with a conviction of the utter worthlessness of his romance, and disgusted at the thought of offering it to another publisher, as he had for a moment feebly resolved to do, he more than half made up his mind to walk to the nearest dock, and fling it as far as he could into the water. But no — it was not worth the trouble; he would throw it under the wheels of the first omnibus. That he could not do, however, without exposing his mortification to the crowd. Already he seemed to be a subject of idle curiosity. Boys grinned at him, as if they knew all about his rejected manuscript. Omnibus-drivers, cased in shining oil-cloth, beckoned to him, with jeers, from their exposed and

drizzly heights; and one shouted "Beggar of Bagdad!" as distinctly as ever Martin had heard anything in his life. Men in the street appeared to be talking about him; and clerks, looking out of shop-windows and laughing, were certainly acquainted with all the circumstances of his case, and found them highly amusing. To drop the burden of his shame, therefore, before the eyes of such, was out of the question, and his thoughts reverted momentarily to the dock theory; but, remembering what his uncle had said about his rashness and folly, he concluded to carry the romance home, and deliberately invent some shrewd device for its destruction.

Had he been quite alone in the world, and could his disgrace have been kept a secret guest in his own bosom, Martin felt that he might have faced ill fortune stoutly. But now a derisive throng of people he knew arose before him, incredulous and mocking. Mrs. Wormlett's boarding-house would henceforth delight in reminiscences of the disappointed author. Mr. Wormlett would jerk his head, and prolong his wise countenance, whenever the subject was mentioned, and preach profoundest homilies thereupon. Miss Tomes would pity, and Mr. Toplink would tell the story good-naturedly, in mysterious whispers, behind Martin's back, and go into convulsions of laughter. Cheesy would lose faith in him, and Mrs. Lydia Dabney would say, on hearing of the affair, that it was just as she expected,—she could have told you so before. And Martin's uncle,—would it be possible to conceal the disgrace from him?

There were two persons, however, of whom Martin thought more anxiously, in connection with the affair, than of all the world beside. One was the charming Sophronia Dabney, who had appeared struck with admiration for his talents, and expressed

an enthusiastic interest in The Beggar of Bagdad. Could he endure the chagrin of appearing a mere pretentious simpleton in her eyes? Perspiration started from his brow at the thought of such humiliation; and he seriously contemplated making his escape from Boston without seeing her again. But there was Alice — what would become of her? Martin groaned as he recalled to mind her sweet innocence, her helplessness, her attachment to and dependence upon him. Crushed in spirit, deserted by fortune, with no honest means within his reach, what could he do, but tear away her clinging arms from his neck, and leave her to her fate? One melancholy source of consolation, however, he had in thinking of her. Let the worst happen, there were, he thanked Heaven, asylums of charity open to such as she; and, should he be driven to the bitterest extremes of want, there would still be comfort, if not happiness, in store for her.

Revolving these things in his mind, Martin reached the boarding-house. He walked rapidly up stairs, in order that no one might see the manuscript under his arm, entered his cheerless room, and shut the door. Alice, quiet and patient, was waiting for him there, with a shawl wrapped round her delicate shoulders, to defend her from the cold.

"Are you here, my poor child?" he asked.

"O, yes! I thought you would come soon," she replied, her pale face lighting up with pleasure. "I find my way here now, without any one to lead me. But what is the matter?" she added, with an overshadowing of the face.

"What should be the matter with me?" cried Martin, as cheerfully as he could.

"I don't know; but I feel it — something; I can't tell what." Alice began to shiver, and tears ran down her cheeks. "What

have they been doing to you? You are not my brother Martin to-day."

"Will you disown me because I have been unfortunate?" murmured the young man, getting down by her side, and placing his arm affectionately around her.

Embracing him almost wildly, and clinging to him still, when he would have gently put her arms away from his humid garments, she could only call him her dear, dear brother, and sob upon his neck. A warming ray of solace stole into his heart; its frozen channels began to thaw and melt; and, after a fierce struggle with his rising emotions, the pride of manly strength gave way, and he wept with her without restraint.

"Would n't they buy your romance?" Alice asked, at length, very softly, playing fondly with his thick locks of hair the while.

"No, my child," replied Martin, with tearful humor. "The Beggar of Bagdad is sent begging in earnest. Here is the immortal manuscript, — which, let me tell you, barely escaped being thrown into the dock, as I came up."

"O, I am so sorry! — so sorry!" said Alice, holding his head to her breast.

"Never mind," said her companion, struggling gently to get away. "I 'll tell you what we 'll do. We 'll take down the fire-board, place the romance carefully in the grate, touch a match to it, and have a pleasant little *auto-da-fé*. You can warm your little fingers by it, Alice."

"No! no! You must n't burn it up. You worked so hard to write it! Why don't you try to sell it somewhere else? Somebody will buy it, I am sure."

"What makes you think so?"

"Because you have got genius, have n't you?"

"Do you believe it?" asked Martin, comforted by the simple faith of the child he loved. "Did anybody ever tell you so?"

"O, no! it came to me," said Alice; "I was thinking of it just now. The word genius — I don't know that I ever thought what it meant before — seemed whispered in my ear. I have seen you on the mountain again, too."

"On the mountain? — with my cross?"

"You had stopped to build a house. O, what a beautiful house it was! It had snow-white pillars in front; and you had leaned your cross against one of them, and left it."

"What did I do then?"

"You made me laugh," said Alice, smiling at the recollection; "you were so proud of your fine house! You dressed yourself in long scarlet robes, and walked around the garden and through the rooms, which were all full of the most wonderful things; and, finally, I saw you trying to stand on your head on the roof."

"Rather ridiculous, I must confess!" said Martin. "I am not at all surprised that you laughed."

"But the funniest thing was, when a big giant put his head right out of the side of the mountain, — his head was almost as large as the house itself, — and began to blow at you with his comical mouth. The first thing, the roof came off, and down you went with it to the ground; so hard, I thought you would have been killed. Then the giant blew away the walls, which turned out to be pasteboard, instead of marble; else you would have been crushed by the ruins. Next the pillars went down, and your cross fell against you so heavily that it carried you with it to the ground. After the house was all blown to pieces, the giant began to blow at you; and your scarlet robes all went into rags, and you yourself came near going off a precipice."

"The house was my romance, I suppose," said Martin.

"I saw you clinging to some shrubs; then an old man, with long white hair, and a bright, loving face, came to you, and told you that the giant had been permitted to blow your house to pieces, because it was not built high enough on the mountain; because it was built, too, of very poor and light materials; and because, if the house had stood as you wished, you would have lived in it, and grown proud and selfish, and built other houses around it, instead of going further up, where there were better materials, and purer breezes, and more beautiful spots. You took his advice, and went back into a part of the house which the giant could not blow away with all his blowing, and spent the night there. In the morning your wounds were healed, and I saw you set out again to climb the mountain, stronger and happier than ever. And all at once your cross became a flag-staff, with two beautiful streamers, and you stood waving it from a bright peak away up in the sunshine; while a great company of people, seeing you from below, rushed up towards you, shouting and clapping their hands, till all the mountain rung."

The effect of this singular narrative upon Martin was wonderful. Whether Alice was a mere dreamer of wild dreams, or whether, in compensation for her outward blindness, she possessed a real power of spiritual sight, he could not determine. But to him, either by chance or otherwise, all her visions possessed a deep significance. And this one brought him hope, and courage, and strength. His soul, like a stranded bark, was lifted by it as by a tide, and upborne on its golden waves.

"O, Alice!" said he, "you give me so much joy! You have taught me a lesson of fortitude and faith. I am a man now, whereas I was a child."

"Yes, you are a man," returned Alice, burying her face in his locks, and weeping joyfully; "and you have such a great and noble work before you! I see it — I see it plainly!"

"And I will do that work," added Martin, in deep, earnest tones, his bosom throbbing and expanding in the floods of light which seemed poured down upon it from a higher sphere. "I have power, — I am full of it now, — I overflow with it. Shall I not, then, stand up and smile at the storm, awaiting with serene faith and trust the hour when the sun will shine? These aspirations, and this sense of something great and good within me, which in my better moments I always feel, are not given in vain. I will be patient, and cheerful, and strong. I will labor and wait. I will climb the mountain, and set my standard high, high upon the summit!"

Martin was a new being. Down into the sea of oblivion sunk the old castle the inexperienced youth had upreared on the shallow foundations of his romance. Its faded banners and desolated halls swept out of sight; and in its place uprose another, of grander proportions, and far more gorgeous than the first had been, its golden gates flung wide to receive its rightful owner.

"I will write a great book, Alice!" said he, after contemplating this new picture for a brief space. "The world shall know me yet. I will know myself. What a weak thing The Beggar of Bagdad is, compared with what I will do some day! In the mean time, however," he went on, with a slight change of voice and manner, "I must do something to live. In the first place, I will sell my romance for what I can get. There are some good things in it, I do believe; and, if I can print it under a fictitious name, and make a little money by it, I shall be satisfied. Another thing, Alice, I will do. Here is Mr. Toplink's favorite

newspaper, the *Streamer of the Free*, which advertises to pay large sums for original contributions, — 'romances, tales, stories of adventure, historical, biographical and humorous sketches, scientific articles, essays, poetry, and so forth.' Its proprietors must be liberal men. I will call on them to-morrow."

With these new schemes in view, Martin took leave of Alice, and went forth again into the storm. Treading all the past beneath his feet, he seemed to walk sublimely on its ruins, and extend his hopeful hands to heaven with shouts of joy. But his spirit's exaltation could not endure long. He came down, at length, to find himself in the low, wet streets, with Mr. Toplink's umbrella over his head, and the Beggar of Bagdad under his arm. He sought out the publisher to whom he had been recommended, and modestly introduced the romance to his notice. The difference between his deportment on this occasion, and the ambitious bearing with which, a few days before, he had applied to another on the same business, indicated that he had in the mean time seen experience.

"What is the character of your work? Ah, yes; a romance," said the publisher, in a patronizing manner, puckering his face up with smiles. "The Beggar of Bagdad — a very taking title. You wish to have it published, I presume? To be sure. A very interesting work, I have no doubt."

So saying, he turned over the sheets, and shook out a letter, which fell upon the floor.

"Ah, excuse me; no harm done, I hope."

"None at all," replied Martin, stooping quickly to pick up the letter.

He colored slightly on recognizing Mrs. Lydia Dabney's thimble-stamp on the big wafer, and her elaborate hand-writing on

the back. It was, in effect, his lost letter of introduction to Mr. Simeon Wormlett.

"A very delightful story, I am sure," resumed the publisher, running his eye over the chapter-headings: 'How the Seven Robbers were outwitted; and what became of the supposed Idiot who outwitted them.' That must be a capital chapter! What is this? 'The Adventures of Alphiddi, and the Pursuit of the Robbers.' A good subject — very interesting, without doubt. 'Lillifoo and her Suite are saved by a Timely Warning, and the Beggar is rewarded.' 'Lillifoo hears more of the Mysterious Music, and questions the Disguised Alphiddi.' 'How the Garden-wall was climbed, and the Guards deceived by an Ingenious Artifice.' 'Lillifoo troubled, her Sire suspicious, and the Beggar exultant!' Capital!" said the publisher, shuffling the manuscripts together, and returning them to their wrapper. "I wish I was able to take hold of the work; I presume to say it would be for our mutual advantage. But I have so many projects on foot for the next six months, that I am under the disagreeable necessity of declining it."

And, with a profusion of bows and smiles, he returned the package to the bewildered Martin.

"Perhaps, if you should read it," suggested the latter, anxiously, "you would decide to retain it, and print it at as early a day as possible."

The publisher was sorry to say that such an arrangement was out of the question; and Martin was politely bowed out of the store. After that, three booksellers were successively visited by the persevering young author. The first treated him contemptuously, and answered his questions in monosyllabic gutturals, without deigning to look at him. The second complained of having

"overpublished," and, like the other, declined even to take the trouble of examining the manuscript. The third was a melancholy individual, who kept an obscure establishment in Cornhill. He did n't know whether he wished to publish anything at that time or not. He observed, with a whine, that all new books involved great pecuniary risks, and that he had lately lost a good deal of money on several works of decided merit. However, if Martin persisted, he would "look over" the romance, and decide upon it in the course of a few days. Martin, impatient, discouraged, and not a little disgusted with the whole affair, did persist, and The Beggar of Bagdad was stowed away in the bookseller's desk.

"It would be a great accommodation," then said Martin, with a mighty effort, "if you could advance me a few dollars on the manuscript."

"That an't our way of doing business," returned the publisher, gloomily. "At any rate, I could n't do anything of the kind until I have read a chapter or so. I advanced ten dollars on a manuscript once, because the author wanted the money, and recommended his work so strongly that I thought it must have merit of some kind. Well, the manuscript is in my desk now; and, as for the ten dollars — "

"Never mind," cried the impatient Martin. "I am not particular. Will you be able to decide about the manuscript on Saturday?"

"Well, — say Monday," drawled the other. "I'll try to have it read by that time."

So, more than ever disgusted with the business of finding a publisher, Martin took his leave, and went out into the rain rejoicing. The Beggar of Bagdad was off his hands; and, happy

in the sense of freedom attendant on that circumstance, he little cared whether he ever saw or heard from it again.

His mind now turned upon the subject of a contribution for the *Streamer of the Free*. He decided on furnishing a poem. His imagination became excited, and straightway the storm was forgotten. The thundering omnibuses, the muddy streets, the wet pavements, pedestrians, umbrellas and rain, vanished from his consciousness. Up into the pure, bright regions of the ideal soared his soul; and there, among its own creations, shadowy shapes of beauty, mystic groves, exquisite flowers of fancy, golden streams of love, and azure hills draped in shining haze of the unreal, it trod sweet measures, like a dancing-girl, and floated round in happy gyrations of rhyme. For a time all this richness of imagery remained unfixed, fluctuating, intangible; but at length a few poetical affinities separated themselves from the misty chaos, brightened into distinctness, and began to assume symmetric form and order. Then commenced the labor of constructing a fit garb of verse to clothe the living thought; and Martin, pacing up and down the dreary streets, and around by the desolate Common, unconscious of cold rain and raw east wind, whispering, muttering, and rolling his eyes in fine frenzy to the roof of Mr. Toplink's umbrella, might have been taken by almost any observer for a sublime lunatic — as perhaps he was.

The ringing of the one-o'clock bells all round the city brought him down from those ideal regions; and, relapsing into a disagreeable consciousness of time and space, he looked about him in some surprise, wondering into what part of the town he had strayed. Presently he recognized a way-mark, hurried down the nearest street, and made all haste to reach Mr. Toplink's place of business, where he had promised to meet that young gentleman

at dinner-time, with the borrowed umbrella. He found him standing in the door, with his coat-collar turned up about his ears, waiting; and the two walked to Portland-street together.

Mr. Toplink was very talkative; but, with the measures of his poem undulating in his brain, Martin could only say "yes" and "no" to his conversation, in a mechanical and absent-minded way. Mr. Toplink, who had learned something of the business his friend was to transact that morning, manifested a keen curiosity to know the result. Martin evaded his questions; but that young gentleman, observing his singular demeanor, and building conjectures thereupon, shrewdly inferred that The Beggar of Bagdad was a failure. Full of the subject, he hurried to the table, chuckling, and, with many significant winks and whispers, revealed, darkly, for the entertainment of Mr. Wormlett and his guests, — who, he hoped, would not be prejudiced by anything he might say, — the true reason why Mr. Merrivale had no appetite for dinner.

Martin, shut up in his room with Alice, who would not go down without him, was happily unconscious of the remarks made concerning his literary abilities and prospects. His mind was completely absorbed in his poem. With Alice sitting peaceful and contented by his side, he wrote out with a pencil the lines he had already composed, revised and polished them, and read them aloud repeatedly, to criticize the rhythm, and to judge of their effect upon the child. She was completely charmed with their music. Perhaps her love and sympathy for their author rendered her keenly susceptible to beauties the world would never see, — as is so often the case with authors' friends. Or, the fact that the lines were descriptive of the grand autumnal scenery, in the midst of which she had enjoyed Martin's presence and conversation so much during the past few days, may have inspired the deep inter-

est she felt. It is possible, again, that what he said about calling the poem "Alice," out of a tender regard for her, was the principal source of the enjoyment she derived from hearing it read. She declared, however, that, independently of all such associations, the poem was the sweetest she had ever heard, and the conscious author was but too happy to believe she spoke the truth.

"Sit down, Mr. Toplink," said he, gleefully, as that gentleman came up from a long sitting at the dinner-table. "I owe you an apology. You thought me very abrupt and impolite, as we came along together; but you did not guess what was going on inside my brain. Here is the whole story written out, — if you would like to hear it."

"Certainly I would," cried Mr. Toplink, in the most friendly manner, reclining on one of the beds, and picking his teeth. "I was sure you had some great project in your head. Did you know you kept muttering to yourself, all the way up?" he asked, showing his gums with a good-natured grin.

"Did I?" laughed Martin.

"And your eyes looked as though they saw things in China. But let 's hear what it 's all about."

"Listen, then," said Martin.

He cleared his throat, and, with the child nestling fondly to his side, read, in deep, measured, musical tones, the poem of

ALICE.

I.

In this grand old leafy palace,
Deep within the lonely grove,
Once I drained joy's magic chalice,
Brimming with the wine of love;

Drank the olden, sacred, golden,
Wondrous, living wine of love.

II.

While low winds from Elfland marches
Breathed a breezy organ-tone
Through the colonnaded arches
Of these birches, oaks and larches,
I sat with my love alone,—
By this solemn sylvan column,
On this moss-embossèd stone.

III.

'Neath the regal roof, uplifted
In the blue autumnal air,
Sensuous blushing sun-rays, sifted
Through its bright dome, quivered, shifted,
Fainted on her bosom fair!
O'er her snowy shoulder drifted,
On the light waves of her hair,—
Burning faintly, with a saintly
Radiance, in her rippling hair.

IV.

In this fairy-haunted palace,
In the golden year's decline,
Deep I drained joy's magic chalice,
Lighted by the eyes of Alice,
Brimming with love's wondrous wine;
Now a mocking demon's malice
Poison holds to lips of mine!

V.

Long bright bars of hazy splendor,
Sloping to these dreamy aisles,

Seemed her soft blue orbs to render
More than earthly soft and tender,—
Angels! save her, and defend her
From the demon's subtle wiles! —
How she thrilled me, how she chilled me,
With the strangeness of her smiles!

VI.

Ah! even then, an envious frost her
Life's mysterious spring had found!
Ere I dreamed I could have lost her,
Shadow dark of death had crossed her
Path, and fixed his fatal bound:
On the morrow, frantic sorrow
Dashed joy's goblet to the ground.

VII

Ere again the spring extended
Her green mantle o'er the land,
Winter, cased in armor splendid,
By his warrior storms attended,
While his icy way he wended
Through the desolated land,
Round her pallid temples dallied,
With his deadly, mailèd hand.

VIII.

Woe is me! for thus it chances
I am sitting here alone,
Charmed no more by maiden glances,
Ever following saddest fancies,
While the deep winds sigh and moan
Round this solemn sylvan column,
In a mournful monotone.

MR. TOPLINK IS ENTHUSIASTIC. p. 169.

IX.

Dear, lost Alice! angel Alice!
Since my spirit-love thou art,
Ever, while the long light reaches
Through these arching arms of beeches,
Grief her deepest lesson teaches,
Till my tears unbidden start.
Thus the priestly Autumn preaches
Life-long memories to my heart.

X.

In this fairy-peopled palace
Now all day I sit alone;
Draining Sorrow's saintly chalice,
Dreaming dreams of angel Alice,
Here I sit and weep alone,
On the mossy, on the glossy
Cushion of this olden stone.

When Martin finished, the child's eyes were filled with tears, and closer still she nestled to his side, sighing and smiling. Mr. Toplink expressed his appreciation in a different way.

"Capital!" he cried, clapping his hands boisterously. "Glorious! — mag-nif-icent! 'Solemn sibyl column' is first-rate. Deuced good!" exclaimed Mr. Toplink, feeling that he could not express himself strongly enough. "Now, if you want that to be appreciated, send it to the *Streamer of the Free*, and let it lead the poet's column, where everybody 'll see it. It 's sublime! just the thing for the *Streamer*."

"To tell the truth," replied Martin, "I have had some thoughts of inflicting it on the *Streamer*."

"Do so, by all means; and don't neglect to italicise 'solemn sibyl column,' which, in my opinion, is the best line in the poem."

"'Solemn sylvan column' is the correct reading," said Martin, biting his lips.

"'Solemn sylvan'—'sylvan' is good," observed Mr. Toplink, with a critical air. "But how would it do to alter it to 'sibyl'? 'Sibyl' is a splendid word!"

A fine word, Martin acknowledged; but in that place he thought "sylvan" more appropriate.

"Perhaps so; I only offered it as a suggestion," said the deferential Toplink. "There was another magnificent line, which should be put in capitals, with two exclamation-points after it, for effect."

"Do you remember which it is?"

"It 's something about trilled me, thrilled me, chilled me,—I 've forgotten precisely how it reads."

"'How she thrilled me, how she chilled me, with the strangeness of her smiles,'" suggested Martin.

"That 's it," cried Toplink. "Would n't it make a better jingle, though, to put in '*trilled me*,' and leave out the second '*how she*'?"

"Perhaps so," assented Martin, with a sarcastic smile.

"There 's only one or two things I object to, particularly, in the whole poem," pursued Mr. Toplink,—"if you will excuse my boldness."

"Certainly," said Martin.

"Then, please to read once more the stanza with the 'showy shoulder shifted' in it."

"'O'er her snowy shoulder drifted, on the light waves of her hair,'—is that what you mean?"

Mr. Toplink said that was it; and Martin read the third stanza, as requested.

"The imagery is gorgeous!" exclaimed the critic, — "perfectly grand. But there is one defect in the lines, which you will certainly correct, as soon as I point it out. You have the rhyme '*hair*' at the end of the last line, after using it only two lines above."

"To be sure; and the repetition is intentional," replied the indignant author. "There is a similar repetition in the first stanza; and I flatter myself that the effect is not bad."

"O, not by any means!" cried the discomfited critic. "I quite fancy it, come to hear it a second time. 'Burning faintly with a saintly —' what d'ye call it — 'in her rippling hair,' is good. That is one of your best stanzas."

To make amends for his blunder, he hastened to furnish Martin with writing materials, accompanied with a particular request that, when the poem was neatly copied out for publication, he might have the pleasure of reading it in manuscript, before it appeared in the *Streamer of the Free*. Martin promised him the gratification; upon which, expressing his firm conviction, that Quintus Quilldriver, the *Streamer's* favorite bard, had written few things that surpassed that composition in "magnificence of fancy and sublimity of diction," Mr. Toplink smilingly retired.

"I am glad he is gone," murmured Alice. "I didn't think he would talk so about your poem."

"How would you have had him talk, my child?"

"I don't know but what he said was well enough. But your Alice was so sweet, you loved her so, and everything was so beautiful and so sad, — how could he laugh and clap his hands?"

"He did not feel it as you did," answered Martin.

"That is it. I felt it, because I knew that you must have felt it all when you wrote it. Is not your Alice a real character? You loved her, and she died, I am sure."

"Not at all," said Martin, patting his companion's cheek. "It 's all imaginary."

"But you have loved?" insisted Alice.

"Yes, and I have seen sorrow. If I had not I could never have written the poem. And, do you know that, in its composition, I lived a whole life of love and sorrow in the grove with my lost Alice? It seems as real to me now as any actual experience I ever had; only infinitely sweeter and purer, just as the soul's inner life is sweeter and purer than the external life of the body. Now let me make a clean copy for the *Streamer;* for," said Martin, with a sigh, as he thought of his uncle, "I have got to go out again in a little while."

XIV.

PROFESSIONAL AND PECUNIARY.

NOTHING satisfactory to either party resulted from Martin's interview with his uncle. On the contrary, the breach between them seemed widened. Mr. Merrivale, discouraged, impatient, mortally offended, perhaps, proposed no subsequent meeting with his refractory nephew; and the latter, having scorned the last opportunity by which, with a small sacrifice of manly pride, he might have secured certain pecuniary advantages, of which he stood wofully in need, was left once more to struggle alone against misfortune and want, dependent upon that most precarious of all trades, the literary profession, for his daily bread. But Martin was not sorry. His spirit, too buoyant to be crushed, leaped forth courageously to face the future. The difficulties it had met and vanquished gave it new strength. It seemed to have fed upon them, as a hunter on wild game, and to have been stimulated and nourished thereby.

In this frame of mind Martin set out on the following morning

to take the poem of "Alice" to the office of the *Streamer of the Free.* It was another stormy day. The same cold east wind, and dreary drizzling rain, swept through the streets of Boston. But his soul was bright and hopeful as a June morning. It was full of sunshine, poetry and song.

He was a little diffident, however, about entering the office of the *Streamer.* Not that he stood in awe of the editor, for he had read his articles; but it appeared to him a meanness, a sacrilege, to ask money for so divine a creation as a poem. The rigid finger of necessity pointed the way, however, and he mounted the office stairs, blushing, but resolved.

"Is the editor in?" he asked of a gentleman who was opening letters at a desk.

"You wish to see Mr. Drove?" said the gentleman addressed, with a complacent smirk. "That is my name, sir. I am the publisher and responsible editor."

He gave Martin a careless nod, and, moistening his thumb on his lips, proceeded to count a small roll of small bills with a consequential air, calculated to impress the visitor.

"I called to see if I could do anything for you, in the way of furnishing articles for the *Streamer.*"

"Ah, yes. Take a seat. What — a — description of articles did you propose to furnish?" asked Mr. Drove, regarding Martin with the same complacent smirk, with his chin out and his eyes half-closed.

"I thought of offering you a poem first, as a specimen of what I can do," replied Martin, taking "Alice" from his pocket. "Would you like to glance your eye over it, sir?"

"Certainly," said the responsible editor. He took the poem, and studied it for some seconds, winking and nodding, with an

expression of great critical acumen. "What is that word?" he asked at length, having stuck fast in the first line. "*Leaky?* — leaky palace? 'In this grand old *leaky* palace,' — is that it?"

"The word is *leafy*," said Martin, with a revulsion of feeling.

"Leafy! O, yes; leafy is better. 'In this grand old leafy palace, deep whitening the — the —'"

"'Deep within,'" suggested Martin.

"'Deep within the comely grove,'" pursued the editor, with difficulty. "'Comely grove,' — is that it?"

"Perhaps," said Martin, flushed and nervous, "it will be as well for me to read it to you."

"As you say," replied Mr. Drove. "Your manuscript is a little blind, and I should want to get accustomed to it to make it out readily. You may read it, if you please."

Martin accordingly cleared his throat, and went through with the poem of Alice; not with much spirit, however, for it seemed to him all the time as if he was reading to a post.

"Very pretty," replied the responsible editor, winking and nodding again at the conclusion. "Quite a pleasing production. It's rather long for our columns, however, I am afraid. You could n't make two short poems of it, could you?"

"About as easy as you could make two small statues of one large one, by cutting it in two," said Martin, in a quiet tone, but with an incensed look.

"Ah! well — never mind. The length will be no great objection," the responsible editor hastened to reply. "If you would like to leave the poem with me, I will give it to my assistant, who generally attends to such things, and have it published — probably — in our next number."

"Very good," replied Martin. "One thing, however, necessity

compels me to mention. I am a good deal in want of funds, and if you could let me have something on the poem this morning, I would esteem it a great favor."

"How much did you a—anticipate getting for it?" inquired the responsible editor.

"I never sold a poem in my life. I don't know what such things are worth," said Martin, frankly. "You can take it, if you will, and pay me what it is worth to you, — if it is nothing more than ten, or even five dollars."

The responsible editor nodded, winked, and looked sagacious.

"We have never been in the habit of paying for poetry," he said, after taking some moments to contemplate the matter. "We pay liberally for prose; but poetry is an article it would be no object for us to buy."

"Excuse me," returned Martin, with dignity, folding his manuscript. "I gathered from your prospectus that you would be glad to purchase original poetry; but it seems that I was mistaken."

"O, we pay for poetry occasionally — now and then," said the other. "We had a prize-poem at the beginning of the present volume, for which we paid handsomely. It was called the 'Streamer of the Free,' and was a very fine production. If you could write us something of that kind, — patriotic, you know, — I an't sure but I might buy it of you, and use it at the beginning of the next volume."

"As a prize-poem?" suggested Martin.

"Well, — yes, possibly," the editor went on, too well satisfied with himself to perceive any irony in the remark. "It 's a good thing for a young writer's reputation, you know, to be the author of a prize production. You have never written much for the press, have you?"

"Not a great deal. I should like to make a beginning with you," said Martin, a little choked. "What kind of prose articles would be most acceptable?"

"Sketches, tales, romances, — anything in the story line, pithy and dramatic. Sketches, of from a column to a column and a half would suit us best."

"May I ask what you pay for such contributions?"

"That depends something on the author's ability and reputation," replied the editor, with a sagacious look. "Our average price is a dollar a column."

"A dollar a column?" repeated Martin, aghast.

"That 's considered a fair price by newspaper writers," pursued the editor. "You see," — opening a copy of the *Streamer*, — "our columns are rather short, and leaded. I suppose you can write up four or five such columns in a day, easy enough."

Martin was struck with the suggestion. The necessity of funds rendered his perceptions clear, and he reflected that the average price for four or five columns of matter would be four or five dollars, of money. Mean as the remuneration seemed, he was not in a position to despise it.

"If I bring you in a sketch to-morrow," said he, "will you decide upon it by the day after?"

"My assistant attends to such things," returned the editor, "and he is sometimes a little slow about reading manuscript; but we will do the best we can with you."

Thereupon Martin, promising to furnish a prose sketch for the *Streamer* on the following morning, put "Alice" in his pocket and his hat on his head, and withdrew. His spirits were not quite so gay, on descending the office-stairs, as when he mounted them; but his determination was as strong as ever to earn a

livelihood with his pen. It was a relief to know that he was not dependent on the *Streamer* alone. There were other Boston newspapers, called "literary," which paid for original contributions. The *Stars and Stripes*, the *Standard of the Free*, the *Free Banner*, the *Yankee Standard* and the *Literary Portfolio*, were probably no less liberal with their contributors than the *Streamer*. Martin had received an impression that, of these, the *Portfolio* was the most respectable; and straightway to the office thereof he resorted, with the poem of Alice. He entered what seemed at first to be a mere cloud of cigar-smoke, packed away in a room; but, on looking about him, he discovered two men sitting by a table in the sickly light which struggled through the obscure atmosphere from a window beyond. One of the men was at work with a cigar in his mouth and a pair of scissors in his hand, making clippings from a newspaper, while the other appeared to be engaged in reading a manuscript. Martin paused before a pile of newspapers that littered the floor, removed his hat, and inquired if the editor was in. The man with the cigar and scissors said he was; and Martin, somewhat embarrassed at doing his delicate errand in presence of a third party, stammered, blushed, and produced the poem of Alice.

"Will you leave it, and call this afternoon or to-morrow?" asked the editor, in a ghastly tone of voice, as if he had weak lungs.

"If you have leisure to look it over now, I will wait," replied Martin, in some trepidation.

The editor made no reply, but, holding his cigar in his mouth, read the poem, sleepily, through puffs of smoke. The author's cheeks and forehead began to tingle and glow. He felt an impulse to snatch his divine composition from the pollution of such

hands, and rescue it from the profane inspection of such eyes. But reason restrained him; he stifled his irritation, and stood by, studying to be patient, while the poem, which should have been read to the music of singing brooks and rustling leaves, by a soul in harmony with nature, was examined by the dull intellect of one whose spirit seemed blasted by the poison in the midst of which he counterfeited life.

"Read it, Killings," said the editor, in the same exhausted tone, passing it over to his companion.

Without another word, he resumed his clipping, having laid his cigar on a book; while Killings went over the poem, and Martin endeavored to forget himself in the columns of a newspaper, which he had picked up from the floor.

"What do you think of it?" asked the editor, faintly, plying his scissors.

"Very fair," replied Killings, in a voice which, by contrast with the other, appeared so full of animation that it made Martin start. "Very fair, indeed."

"Would you like to have it published?" asked the editor, still without looking up.

"I would," said Martin, over the newspaper.

"If you will leave it, I'll have it announced next week for the week after. It is worth a good notice, an't it, Killings?"

Killings thought it was, decidedly, and appeared quite patronizing towards Martin. But the latter felt a painful consciousness that "Alice" ought to bring him something besides compliments and puffs. He therefore made an effort, and asked — affecting a business air — what price was commonly paid for such productions.

The editor responded, in stereotyped phrase, that they had never

paid much for poetry; that their paper had been but recently established, and was not able as yet to pay much for matter of any kind. Contributions of real merit, however, they were always glad to secure; it was for their interest to do so, whenever they could. Most of their writers had furnished matter, so far, gratuitously; and, when they paid anybody, they would feel under obligations to give these the first chance. This was understood with their contributors; and, if he would like to join them on the same conditions, the proprietors would be glad to have him. Their business was increasing rapidly, and the prospect was that they would soon be able to pay as liberally as anybody for original matter.

Having delivered himself of these sentiments, with sluggish deliberation, amid puffs of smoke, and in a voice so miserably low that Martin could follow him only with the strictest attention, the editor opened a fresh newspaper, — if anything in that office could be properly called fresh, — and proceeded to glance over its columns.

Martin replied that he could not, in his present circumstances, contribute to the *Portfolio* on such terms, and took his leave, with a good deal of nausea and not much ceremony. To his surprise, Killings followed him out, and accosted him in the entry.

"You know me, I suppose," said that gentleman, leering complacently at the young author. "You know of me, at any rate. My name is Killings."

"Mr. Killings," repeated Martin, doubtfully.

"I am *the* Killings," pursued his new friend, putting out his lips, wrinkling his forehead, and bowing oddly with his hands on his sides. "Of course you have heard of Killings, the panorama man."

"Ah, yes," said Martin, brightening.

"You make a business of writing, I presume?" suggested Killings, with another contortion of his face, expressive of conscious importance. "Yes, certainly; then perhaps you would like to do a little job for me?"

Martin answered eagerly that he would. Thereupon the sprite that had charge of the Panorama Man's face shifted the scene suddenly, and showed him with puffed-out cheeks, great eyes and gathered brows, contemplative.

"I want," said Killings, with wise deliberation, after mature thought on the subject,—"I want—something—something quaint—and fanciful! You catch the idea. I'm satisfied you have the talent to do just what I want. That—that's a very pretty poem of yours, sir," added Killings, with a sudden change to the patronizing manner, doing a broad smile for Martin's gratification. "I—I was a good deal pleased with it."

Martin replied that he was glad to hear him say so, and inquired what subject he desired him to treat upon.

"I want a song," said Killings, caricaturing his face again to express profundity of design. "Something taking and popular. You have seen my panorama?"

Martin was sorry to confess he had not enjoyed that entertainment.

"You must go and see it. I'll give you a couple of tickets. You can take that young lady, you know," said Killings, looking frightfully funny. "I want you to get some idea from the panorama for the song. You can call it '*The Great Killings and his Panorama*,' or something like that. If it has the right twang to it, I'll have it set to music, and published in a popular form. You have probably seen some of my songs?"

On receiving a negative reply, the great Killings returned to

the editorial room, and brought out a number of sheets of music, to which he called Martin's attention. There were four distinct songs, dedicated to the modest Killings, with admiration, esteem, love, gratitude, and several other qualities of the heart, in various degrees, from the positive to the superlative, by their humble composers. The design of each seemed to be to exalt and glorify the popular Killings, and to popularize his panorama.

"If you can write me a song as good as either of these, I'll pay you liberally for it. You can do it, I know."

Martin glanced at "Sunset on the Rhone; Words suggested by a Scene in Killings' Panorama, and respectfully dedicated to that great public benefactor;" and replied, smiling, that he believed he could. He also added — impelled by an instinctive desire to earn something — that he would try; upon which the sublime Killings expressed his approbation.

"Do you ever write prose?" that personage afterwards inquired.

"O, yes," replied Martin.

"Sketches?"

"I am about to try my hand at them."

"You have probably seen some sketches of this kind going the rounds," said Killings, taking a roll of newspaper-strips from his breast-pocket. "Here 's one — '*How the Witty Killings come it over the Old Maids*,' — published in the *Stars and Stripes*. Here 's another, from the *Portfolio*, — '*Turning the Tables; or, Killings and the Practical Joker*,' one of the best things Bob Buster ever wrote. '*How Killings sold the Landlord*' is very good, too, written by old Obadiah. *This* is one of the most popular things that 's been published — '*Fun among the Old Fogies; or, the immortal Killings and his Panorama at Beetle-*

borough.' Would n't you like to write something of that sort? I 'll pay you liberally, besides what you get from the newspaper it 's published in."

Martin replied that he did not think such compositions would be at all to his taste; alleging that he preferred to elaborate imaginary scenes.

"All the better; I don't care to give you any incidents."

"But, if I should make you the hero of a sketch, you would expect me to start with some actual occurrence?"

"That 's perfectly immaterial. Write just such a sketch as you please, tell the story on to a great joker, who of course gets the start of everybody, and bring it to me. If it 's up to the mark, I 'll insert my own name instead of the fictitious one, and pay you for it before it is published. Now, that 's an omject," said Killings, through his nose; "an't it?"

Martin replied that it was so, and that he would give the subject his serious attention.

"When you get anything written, bring it in," resumed the generous Killings. "You 'll find me here during the day. By the way," — speaking through his nose in a low tone, confidentially, —"I rather expect there 'll be a change in the management of the *Portfolio* soon; if there should, it 'll promably be for your advantage. I 've got a good deal of money invested in it, and I 've some ideas I want to carry out, when the time comes. Don't say anything; but think of what I 've told you. Mum 's the word."

So saying, the immortal Killings made a number of grotesque grimaces, expressive of unfathomable depth of thought, accompanied with extraordinary sagacity, patted Martin on the shoulder, touched his nose significantly, and returned to the smoky

room. As for Martin, he went down into the cold, wet street, a good deal disgusted, a good deal amused, and not a little astonished; and there, drinking in the damp east wind, he experienced a sense of freedom and refreshment, as men are wont to do escaping after long confinement in close walls.

Although he still had the poem of "Alice" on his hands, Martin did not feel discouraged. In attempting to dispose of it, he had made two engagements to write; and, gathering hopes of a livelihood from his success, he resolved to make one more effort to sell his verses, and see what the result would be. He accordingly proceeded to the office of the *Stars and Stripes*, and, with some diffidence, introduced "Alice" to the publisher. The latter — a proud, stiff, wooden sort of a man, with an expression of face which gave one the idea that he smelt something disagreeable — turned his neck in his dickey, received the manuscript, and gave it a hurried reading.

"Your article will be accepted," said he, with difficult articulation, as if he was still oppressed with the disagreeable odor, and could not use his organs of speech with freedom.

Martin felt a great repugnance to mentioning the necessity which compelled him to require pay for his poem; but, as there was no alternative, he did not hesitate to follow up the publisher's decision with that important statement.

"Very well; if that is the case," replied Mr. Duckdown, abruptly, showing as much impatience as a wooden man could be expected to show, "you can take the poem and go away; we don't want it. We have no end to poetry sent to us for nothing, and it is ridiculous to talk of buying it."

Mr. Duckdown returned to the newspaper he had been reading, looking as if the unpleasant smell had become stifling, and

relief depended upon the absence of his visitor. Martin accordingly stalked out of the office, with a hot face and sharply-compressed lips, and went home, satisfied to postpone all further experience with the weekly press for an indefinite period.

Alice sat by her friend's side that day while he wrote a sketch designed for the *Streamer of the Free.* The room was gloomy and cold; the lamp-stand he used for a desk was inconveniently narrow; Mr. Toplink's ink was pale and watery; the beds, the wash-stands, the dingy walls, and the rag-carpet — appropriately named — which covered the floor, were not inspiring objects; and certain unhappy thoughts, which would intrude themselves upon Martin's mind, sadly ruffled the feathers of the bird of fancy, and hindered its flight. Yet he somehow labored through a sketch entitled "*White Hairs and Auburn Tresses; or, the Old Man and his Youthful Bride;*" which he finished after dinner, and which Alice pronounced pretty and touching.

In the evening he invited Mr. Toplink — who was delighted to have that pleasure — to go with him to see Killings' Panorama. He was a good deal interested in that wonderful work of art, and found no difficulty in selecting a subject for the proposed song; which he composed, in part, during the performance. He did not suit himself, however, in consequence of the annoyance occasioned by Mr. Toplink's conversation. That sociable young gentleman, having seen the panorama before, undertook the part of interpreter, and talked in hoarse whispers during the entire entertainment, not much to the gratification of any person except himself. His delight seemed unbounded when his memory enabled him to anticipate the lecturer, and inform Martin what phrases would be used to describe the castle or the forest, and what joke would be

perpetrated about the gored horse, at the bull-fight, taking a horn and getting high.

The lecturer was the great Killings himself — the eloquent funny, handsome, witty, mad wag Killings, as the paid puffs in the newspapers called him. His style of lecturing was unique. It was not altogether pleasant to Martin, although Mr. Toplink considered it a model. He talked much through his nose, and his voice rose and fell rather too regularly upon the waves of a monotonous sing-song to be agreeable. His language was exceedingly florid in all places where the subject would admit of ornament, and often where it would not. A portion of the audience appeared to consider him a great orator, while the majority regarded him as simply ridiculous. Accordingly, whenever the former cheered in earnest, the latter cheered in fun; and Killings, always gratified, acknowledged the honors done him with magnificent bows.

"Here," he would say, using his rod to indicate a scene on the canvas, "here you perceive the justly-celebrated cataract of Val Corno; a luxuriant spot, as you observe; where the waters come careering down in mad sport from their wild mountain homes, and, leaping sublimely from rock to rock, plunge headlong amid clouds of mist and spray, spanned by the most exquisitely beautiful rainbows, of gorgeous dyes, into a boiling and foaming Phlegethon below. Here," he would add, after the applause following this burst of eloquence had subsided, "I have spent many a pleasant hour, pondering the sublimity of the scenery, and revelling in poetic visions, or conversing with the poor peasants, to whom I never failed to give a generous alms, when they related to me the wild and picturesque legends of their native valley, by which means I always managed to be a great favorite with the peasantry

wherever I went; and I confess that I have been as much pleased with their simple attentions, as by the tributes of honor and respect which nobility and royalty have heaped upon my humble head;" at which allusion to his triumphs in foreign lands the modest Killings made it a point to bow very low, and cough deferentially.

But Killings was no less humorous than sublime. Mr. Toplink declared that, a little more, and that inimitable joker would be the death of him. His companion, however, probably through envy of the great man's success, declared that he could see nothing but coarseness and vulgarity in the clownish grimaces into which Killings screwed his face for the gratification of the public, and which appeared to be his principal attraction.

Martin finished his song that night before he slept; and on the following morning he set out to call on the famous Killings, and visit the office of the *Streamer of the Free*. He first left his manuscript of "White Hairs and Auburn Tresses" in the hands of Mr. Drove, then hastened to find his patron in the smoky editorial room of the *Portfolio*.

Mr. Killings received the song with a grimace expressive of pleasant surprise, and invited Martin to sit down, after shaking hands with him cordially.

"Pretty fair," said he, having read the stanzas twice very carefully. "How did you like the exhibition?" looking up with a sudden change of countenance, like a harlequin.

"I was interested," replied Martin.

"And the lecture? But never mind; spare my blushes," said the witty Killings, facetiously. "The girl who played the piano and sang, — how was you pleased with her?"

"Very well, indeed. I am fond of music," answered Martin.

"And how would you like to hear her sing this song of yours? It would n't sound bad, would it?" said Killings, with another grimace. "I think I shall have her try it; and if it 's popular, you may see it published in the course of a few weeks. You can put your name to the words, if you like; it 'll be a good thing for your reputation. And how would you like to have me introduce the song to the audience, with a complimentary allusion to the talented and promising young author — eh?" cried Killings, with ludicrous contortions of face.

Martin said he preferred that his name should not be known in connection with the song; and that Mr. Killings could make any such allusions to the author as he chose, with that understanding.

"I like your modesty no less than your genius," answered the noble Killings, shaking Martin's hand again with great cordiality. "I think we shall be fast friends. I like to deal with such fellows as you. Now, there are hundreds of young writers who would be glad to make regular engagements to furnish me with songs, — but I have n't found one that pleased me so well as you do. If you 'll agree to write what I want during the coming season," the generous Killings went on, talking through his nose, "I 'll pay you handsomely; I 'll make it an omject for you. What do you say?"

Martin was beginning to feel that he had done Killings injustice. He thought the eccentric manners of that remarkable man might have prejudiced him, and that, beneath his disagreeable egotism and affectations, there existed, after all, a true heart. He accordingly expressed a willingness to undertake the business he proposed.

"That 's the way I like to hear you talk," resumed the proprie-

tor of the panorama, affectionately laying his hands on Martin's shoulders, and putting his long nose into his face. "I consider it a fortunate circumstance which has thrown us together. I shall probably be paying you a great deal of money during the next twelve months, and you will be furnishing me what I want in return."

"This song suits you, then," observed Martin, gratified and encouraged.

"It does very well," returned Killings. "These things don't cost you much effort, I suppose."

"Not much. If an idea strikes me, I find no difficulty in composing."

"And I suppose that, this being your first attempt, you did not intend to charge me anything for it?"

The magnanimous Killings regarded Martin with a look of unconscious simplicity exceedingly beautiful to behold. Upon which the young man, ashamed of bantering for a trifle, but forced by circumstances to appear thus mean, stammered forth something about the necessity of raising a few dollars to pay his board bill that very day.

"I don't think I've got any small bills about me, just now," said the great-hearted Killings, laying his hand thoughtfully upon his trousers-pocket. "I'll tell you what I'll do, though," brightening. "Say nothing about this song; but bring me in another to-morrow morning," — talking through his nose, — "with a sketch such as I spoke about, and I'll have some money for you. Now, that's fair, an't it?" with a grin which tightened the skin all over his face, until it appeared diversified — as geographers say — with sallow spots and streaks.

It was Martin's disposition to let those he dealt with have their

own way in all trifling matters of business. The magnanimous Killings, therefore, had his way; and Martin went home, somewhat disappointed, it is true, but, nevertheless, quite hopeful of the great things his noble patron would do for him by and by.

XV.

BOARDING-HOUSE EXPERIENCE.

OUR author worked hard with his pen until near one o'clock, — completed a song, and began a sketch, designed to be humorous, of which Mr. Smith, — that is to say, Killings, — should the article suit the proprietor of the panorama, was the triumphant hero, — when, being interrupted by the arrival of Mr. Toplink, he postponed the completion of his task till after dinner. Alice, who had been sitting by his side, glided out of the room, unguided; and Martin, laying down his pen with a yawn, suffered the tension of his mind to relax under the genial influence of his social room-mate's conversation.

"If I 'd thought 't was meat-pie day I would n't have come home," said Mr. Toplink, brushing his hair. "Well, yes, I

would, too. We always have fun, meat-pie days; and we can laugh, if we can't eat; that 's something. An't Wormlett a case, though? He won't get mad at our jokes, 'cause it don't pay. 'Simeon, my son,' says he, 'keep your temper; learn to conquer your bad passions,' says he; 'because,'" — Mr. Toplink caricatured Mr. Wormlett's moralizing attitude, —"'because the teaching of the Scriptur' is not only agin' it, but a man never makes nothing by being angry, neither. Learn to keep your temper, Simeon, my son,' says he, 'and you 'll always have the advantage over,' — fol-lol, did-dle-de, dum-de, O," sang Mr. Toplink, with a sudden change of manner, attitude and color. "There was an old nigger, and his name was — Mr. Wormlett! walk in! — don't be bashful!" he cried, with affected jocularity; "I was just giving Mr. Merrivale and Alice a taste of my musical capacities."

Mr. Toplink was a good deal embarrassed by the unexpected appearance of Mr. Wormlett; but, as the latter gave no indication of having overheard what had been said, the facetious young gentleman recovered himself, and politely invited him to a seat on one of the beds.

"I 'm glad to see you having a sociable time," said Mr. Wormlett, with an indulgent smile. "Simeon, my son, shet the door; always learn to shet the door after ye, my son. Sociability," he went on, jerking his head back, and extending his hand with a dignified gesture towards Mr. Toplink, "sociability is good in its place; there is a time for everything under the sun, saith the preacher."

"I am precisely of your opinion," said Mr. Toplink, overflowing with smiles.

"I says to my son Simeon here," — Mr. Wormlett placed his

hand on Simeon's head, while that youthful prodigy writhed, and twisted and grinned, as usual, — "'Simeon, my son,' I says, 'don't do a man no harm to laugh now and then, and make others laugh at proper seasons. Be merry, my son,' I says, 'only don't let it interfere with business. If you 've got anything to do, do it, and then laugh, and it 'll be good for you.' An't that what I tell ye, Simeon?"

Simeon turned himself around, and, hanging his chin over his right shoulder, in a painful attitude, said "Yes," with a spasmodic giggle.

"There is principles involved, you see," pursued his father, profoundly. "Business afore pleasure, always. That reminds me, Mr. Merrivale, that your week is about up; and, the expenses of the boarding-house being great, I am constrained to ask you for a little money."

Martin changed color as rapidly as Mr. Toplink had done on the abrupt appearance of Mr. Wormlett at the door. The truth was, he had not a shilling in his pocket, having expended all the money he had left, after paying Mr. Wormlett the Saturday before, in procuring some necessary comforts for Alice.

"I was in hopes," said he, with visible trouble, "that you would not expect anything from me until to-morrow. I shall receive some money, probably, in the morning."

"Probably!" repeated Mr. Wormlett, with a stern look and with great rigidity of neck. "I hope I an't going to be disappinted in you, Mr. Merrivale!"

"I hope not," said Martin, with considerable heat about the face.

"Hope not!" echoed the moralizer, with virtuous indignation. Having learned from Mr. Toplink that The Beggar of Bagdad

was a failure, he was prepared to be severely upright in his dealings with the unfortunate author. "It seems to me a man of principle would n't speak in jest that way. Look here, for instance; 'Simeon, my son,' I says, 'are you going to disremember all the useful lessons I 've took so much pains to learn ye, and turn out bad, — be wild and wasteful, and bring down the gray hairs of your pa and ma in sorrow to the grave? What does Simeon reply? 'I hope not'? If he says that, he 's no son of mine. This is the way, now, — 'Simeon, my son, are you going to turn out bad?' 'No, sir,' says Simeon; and he means it. He don't hope not, nor no such thing; he 's sure. That 's my philosophy," added Mr. Wormlett, turning with a grim look to Mr. Toplink.

Mr. Toplink, smiling obsequiously, was of Mr. Wormlett's opinion, as before.

"Money," Mr. Wormlett went on, "is the great standard to go by. Simeon, my son, can you tell me why I call money a standard?"

Simeon, dislocating his jaw, and grinning over his shoulder, could not tell.

"Money is a standard, 'cause it stands for something else," said his father, with the complacent air of a great moral teacher. "What does it stand for, my son? I might better ask, what don't it stand for? It stands for property, don't it? 'cause when we estimate the valley of anything, we say it 's worth so much money. It stands for respectability too, don't it, my son? To be sure; for we always wants to know how much money a man has got, so as to know jest how to treat him. It stands for common sense; for common sense makes money and keeps it. It stands for honesty; for if a man pays his debts you may always

know he 's honest; and if he don't pay,"— Mr. Wormlett regarded Martin with a stern expression, — "it 's cause he an't honest; that 's a certain case. An't it so, Mr. Toplink?"

The deferential Toplink was still of Mr. Wormlett's opinion.

"Your observations are exceedingly profound," cried the fiery author. "But, as they seem intended for me, I must tell you that they are quite uncalled for. I am not aware that I have yet given you any reason to suspect my honesty."

"When a young man, a stranger, a person without money or means," replied Mr. Wormlett, with sage deliberation, "comes to me and says, 'I brought a letter from your sister, who recommended me to get board with you,' — but fails to produce the letter — "

"It is proof-positive of wilful deception, I suppose," suggested Martin, tempering his fury to a look and tone of withering sarcasm.

"I can only say it looks suspicious," returned Mr. Wormlett, jerking his head to one side; "and I may add it would be a satisfaction to see the letter."

"You shall be gratified," said Martin, taking the important document from his pocket, and flinging it on the bed, with a gesture of impatience and contempt. "It was rolled up in some manuscripts by mistake, — a pardonable circumstance, I trust."

Mr. Toplink, who appeared to enjoy this altercation hugely, snatched up the letter, and gave it with a chuckle to Mr. Wormlett. The latter scrutinized the superscription with a sagacious look, as if suspicious of a forgery; then tore the folds away from the big wafer, opened the letter and examined its contents. His brows gathered as he read; and suddenly he turned upon Martin

in a manner somewhat at variance with Mr. Toplink's statement touching his philosophical self-control.

"I see!" he cried, raising his voice above its ordinary moralizing key. "No wonder you kept this letter back; no wonder you did n't like to have me know Lyddy's opinion of you; no wonder it got into your manuscripts by mistake! Read that!"

With a grim look, he thrust Mrs. Dabney's letter into the unhappy lodger's hands. Martin, astonished, read as follows:

"DEAR BROTHER SIMEON: I don't think it advizble to trust the barer of this he is a wuthliss fellow I am nowin to the fact that he aint got a doler in the wrold I suppozed he would go rite to you to git bordid and so give him this letter to warn you aginst him I am well and hope you are injoin the same blessin. Your affectionate sister. LYDIA DABNEY."

"Now, what am I to think?" demanded the wrathful Wormlett, appealing to Martin, Simeon and Mr. Toplink, collectively. "I an't angry; I don't give way to temper; that don't pay, as I tell my son Simeon here; but, — but I am justly indignant. What am I to think now, Mister Merrivale?"

"What you please," replied Martin, throwing the letter down in disgust. "You may spare your insults, however. If I leave your boarding-house this afternoon, I owe you nothing. I do not see but that our difficulty is easily settled, after all."

"Well, I don't mean to be too severe," returned Mr. Wormlett, a good deal shaken. "There is some reason in what you say; and I shall be sorry to have you leave, Mr. Merrivale, — very sorry; but I have told you the rules of the house — "

"And I 'll abide by them," said Martin, briefly; "only let me hear no more on the subject, if you please."

Mr. Wormlett was abashed. The philosopher was confounded. The great moralizer was nonplussed. Conscious of having transgressed one of those sublime laws of action which he had preached to Simeon from his early childhood; and perceiving that, in consequence of a little undue heat and haste, he had sacrificed a boarder who might possibly have proved profitable to the establishment, besides losing not a little personal dignity; he quailed visibly before the scornful eyes of Martin. To add to his discomfiture, Mr. Toplink, pleasantly excited by the tragical termination of the dispute, declared himself decidedly "of Mr. Merrivale's opinion." Yet Mr. Wormlett managed to retreat with considerable pomp, under the cover of an impregnable moral maxim, — looking wise and unconcerned, and laying down principles to Simeon as they descended the stairs.

"The old giraffe! — the miserable buffoon!" said the exasperated Toplink, in a whisper, slamming the door after him and kicking it. "I never saw a man abused so as you have been in my life," — speaking in a bolder tone. "It 's shameful! Why, I — I came very near tumbling the old fool down stairs!"

"I am glad you did n't," observed Martin, dryly. "You should learn to govern your noble impulses."

"I knew 't would n't do no good to side with you," returned the apologetic Toplink, discerning a sting of irony in his friend's words; "'t would only have made him worse. He 's the stupidist, obstinatest, meanest old fogy ever was, — if I do say it. Well, I won't say nothing bad about him, neither. It an't my way. I must confess, though, that if I could have run one of these things through him," — taking down a pair of foils and flourishing them in both hands, — "it would have been a satisfaction."

"I am glad you did n't; and I beg of you never to think of such a thing again," said Martin.

"You won't leave this afternoon, will ye?" resumed the friendly Toplink, in a regretful tone. "I can't bear to think of such a thing. I wish I had the money, — I 'd lend it to you in a minute. Shan't I ask Mr. Wormlett to wait on you till Monday? He 'll do it, I know, if I ask him."

"No, I thank you," replied Martin, smothering his rage. "I have no desire to stay."

Thereupon Mr. Toplink appeared heart-broken, declaring that the separation would be the cruellest thing he ever experienced, and offering to do anything in the world for Martin, to prove his friendship.

"You are very kind," said Martin, resting his head upon his hands. "But you can do nothing for me at present, — unless it be to leave me alone a little while. You 'd better go down to dinner, Mr. Toplink; the bell rang some time ago."

Mr. Toplink seemed struck with the observation. His countenance fell, and he was for a moment speechless. Before withdrawing, however, he rallied sufficiently to repeat, in a feeble manner, his assurances of devotion to Martin, and to make use of some strong abusive terms touching the character of Mr. Wormlett. After that he went down, and became extremely facetious, at the dinner-table, on the subject of his room-mate's inability to pay a week's board in advance.

Martin had been alone but a few minutes, when Alice, who never liked to be in the chamber when Mr. Toplink was present, groped her way from the garret, entered softly, and placed her arms about the young man's neck, before he was aware of her approach.

"Ah, my child," said he, in a choked voice, "I was just thinking of you. How light your step is!"

"It is because there is n't much of me, I suppose," replied Alice, speaking in a cheerful tone.

"I shall be glad when the rain is over, so that you can get out doors once more," replied Martin, tenderly. "This is the third day of the storm; it is killing you, Alice, — you are looking very pale. You must stay in the kitchen more, where there is a fire."

"You are so kind to think of me, when you have so many troubles of your own!" exclaimed the affectionate child. "What have they been doing to you? I feel such a sharp pain when I come near you! Tell me what it is; won't you?"

Martin answered, evasively, that Mr. Wormlett had been in, and there had been a slight misunderstanding between them.

"That reminds me of such a funny picture I was having in my mind just now," said Alice, beginning to laugh. "There was a great big silver dollar, — O, ever so big! — and it looked real queer rolling along the ground. There were people all around it, and on it, and under it; some were riding it, some were pushing it, and it was running over some. There were rich people, ever so grand, on the top; but, as it rolled, they kept dropping off, if they did n't look out, while others clung to the side that was going up, and took their turn riding. They were poor people that it run over, and drove out of the way; and O, some of them got dreadfully hurt and frightened. But those behind did n't mind at all; they kept pushing and shouting, and trying to climb up; and what made me laugh was to see the Wormlett family — the old man and little Simeon and all — putting their shoulders to the wheel with all their might, while you stood by and watched them with a look of pity, till you felt the dollar rolling over your foot."

The story served to amuse Martin for the moment; but his perplexed mind was reverting to the gloomy prospect before him, in spite of the child's endeavors to comfort him, when the good Miss Tomes tapped lightly at the door and entered.

"Don't say a word," said she, putting something in Martin's hand. "I can spare it just as well as not. It 's for this dear child, you know," she added, kissing Alice. "I 'd give ten times as much before I would have her go away."

And the queer Miss Tomes, with her plain face and feeble curl, of whom Mr. Toplink made so much fun in his good-natured way, ran out of the room before Martin could ask what she meant. Then, exceedingly astonished, he looked at the little roll of paper she had left in his hand. It was a fragment of Mr. Wormlett's "standard," in the shape of a five-dollar bill.

Martin's feelings revolted at the thought of making use of the good creature's money. But he remembered that it was not for him, but for Alice. He thought of the storm, through which it would be so hard to remove the child; he considered the difficulty of finding another boarding-place; and he reflected that the five dollars was only a loan, which, in the morning, or on Monday at the furthest, he would be able to return. He accordingly resolved to use the means which had been sent to his relief at so critical a moment; and, overflowing with the kindliest emotions, blessing the good Miss Tomes, for whose sake he could forgive and pity and love even those whose low ambition was to roll the almighty dollar through the world, he arose rejoicing, and, taking Alice by the hand, led her cheerfully down stairs. There was a sudden hush as they entered the dining-room; and Mr. Toplink, blushing to the roots of his hair, made some hasty and inappropriate remarks about the uncertain state of the weather.

After dinner Martin settled with Mr. Wormlett for another week's board in advance, — a circumstance which drew forth from that deep well of wisdom several buckets-full of sage counsel, on the subject of keeping your credit good, if you mean to get along in the world, make money and be respectable.

He also finished the sketch he was writing for Mr. Killings. This, together with the song, he carried to the office of the *Portfolio* the next morning, expecting to receive handsome compensation for his labor. To his disappointment, however, he learned that Mr. Killings had gone out of town, and would not return until the following Monday. His pecuniary hopes met with a similar check at the office of the *Streamer of the Free*. "White Hairs and Auburn Tresses" had not been examined. Mr. Drove blamed his assistant, who, he said, had not shown his face in the office for three days; hinting strongly about employing Martin to do certain things left undone by the negligent editor; and requested that he might have a confidential talk with him early the coming week.

Thus pass the days of cold rain and raw east wind. Thus the first period of Martin's literary experience, with its blasted hopes and wounded ambition, its misery and suspense, the death agony and triumphant resurrection of the soul's energies, draws to a close. And the still Sabbath dawns upon the world.

O, blessed be the day forevermore! Six days the noisy strife of life — the struggle for money and pleasure, for power, and fame, and daily bread — goes madly on; the wheels of toil and trade spin round and round; their ceaseless clang and murmur fill the earth; till man almost forgets that he is man, and deems that money and pleasure, power, and fame, and daily bread, are the highest, choicest blessings the immortal soul can know.

But the Sabbath comes; there is respite from strife; the wheels of toil go round and round no more; their clang and murmur die away, and there falleth a hush upon the air. Man is reminded that he is man, and not a mere machine, sensuous of bodily delights and intelligent of dollars. The chrysalis is made conscious of its budding wings. The angel of Peace comes down, sanctifying the sunlight and the gracious airs. And a still, small voice speaketh unto all who will hear, saying, "O, man! thou hast two natures and two lives. The first in thy experience is the lower, the external, the mortal; the other is the higher, the internal, the immortal. Arise, then, from the dust in which thou creepest, and come up hither. Look from thy labor-soiled hands upon the heavenly fields within thine own soul. Forget — O, forget the care and confusion of the world, and bathe in those golden streams of light and joy which flow ever into the heart where love abides!" The voice speaketh ceaselessly, indeed; for to the voice all days are Sabbath-days; but as yet only on the seventh can man afford to pause from his labor and listen.

Then blessed be that day forevermore! But make it not a gloomy season, O, fearful and austere friend! Let it be, as in truth it is, a jubilee of the spirit. Let thy worship be cheerful and sweet as the song of the birds, the rustle of green leaves, or the music of running brooks.

How beautifully upon the city dawns this holy Sabbath! The storm — the dreary storm, of four days' duration — is over. In the still night the clouds rolled asunder, the changeless stars looked forth from their calm azure depths, and the bright moon shed her beams through shining rifts. And now the fresh rays of the morning sun fall aslant upon the city roofs, and bathe the chimney-tops in golden light.

In golden light, too, very soft and fair, they bathe the sad, pale brow of Alice Thorne. She is up early this cool Sabbath morning; and she sits by the window of the room, breathing the fresh air, and wondering at the hush that pervades the town. There is no sound of vehicles in the street, save when the milkman's wagon rattles over the stones. Only now and then are footsteps heard upon the pave, passing in the city's solitude. The fishmonger, who comes in all sorts of weather, six times a a week, and cries, "Nice fresh cod, haddock, halibut!" often awaking Alice from her dreams, may be dead this morning, she thinks, the street seems so lonely and solemn without him.

Thus, while Miss Tomes sleeps a dead and heavy sleep, — poor creature! she has worked hard all the week, earning her small wages in the shop by day, and sewing late at night upon some garments for Alice, and this rest is what she needs, — the blind girl sits by the open window, with the sunshine on her brow and in her hair. She cannot see the damp roofs, nor the red chimneys, nor the doves upon the eaves, nor the canary's cage and homely flower-pot in the window opposite, nor the lovely azure vault overhead. 'T is only to breathe the air, and wonder at the hush, and feel the sunshine on her delicate brow, that she leans pensively over the casement. Ah, what thronging thoughts crowd upon that young and tender heart! Now her soul seems all memory, and the past is a melancholy autumn, wherein it dwells under a purple haze. But the sad pleasure such remembrance brings cannot last. November rains, drenching, sullen, and bitter cold, sweep away the warm October skies, the purple haze and the melancholy airs. Sharp pangs shoot through the blind girl's soul, as her father's fate, which haunts her day and night, overshadows her again, this Sabbath morning, like a pall;

but pitying angels gather round, with faces bright with love, and shine immortal radiance through the gloom, into the very depths of her despair, kindling anew the smouldering embers of hope.

How late everybody sleeps, this quiet morning! In vain the regal splendor of the day invites; the drowsy people go not forth. A few bright faces may indeed be seen where the sunrise glory floods the Common slopes, and the sweet south-west breathes freshly from the hills. But rest thou well, O sleeper! Six days hast thou labored and done all thy work, and on the seventh thou canst afford this sloth. There is no money to be earned to-day; then wherefore shouldst thou stir?

Yet Alice is not the only wakeful spirit in Mr. Wormlett's house. The shaking grandfather, who sleeps in a little niche under the roof, is out of his hole at daylight, shivering and whispering to himself. He bethinks him of the fearful waste of charcoal attendant on Susan's efforts to start the kitchen fire; and, impelled by the instinct of saving, goes down to kindle it for her, more economically. There, half an hour later, she finds him on his knees before the stove, blowing his breath away, and muttering angrily, because there is not, in the little handful of charcoal he has buried in hard anthracite, sufficient vitality to light the heap. How he gibbers and shakes and threatens with his impotent hand and glassy eye, when, pushing him impatiently away, she undoes all he has done, and uses just as much precious fuel in kindling the fire anew as if he had never in his life strained his poor old back, and expended his feeble breath, and filled his knees with sharp pains and all his bones with aches, to prevent so shameful a waste! Susan has no pity for the miserly grandfather. She drives him from the kitchen without mercy; and the poor exile can think of no sweeter consolation than that of stealing into

the parlor and hunting for pins on the carpet before the boarders come in.

There is still another person astir in Mr. Wormlett's house. Start not, reader! it is Mr. Toplink. Mr. Toplink is habitually slow in the morning. His practice of late rising is indeed one of Mrs. Wormlett's greatest trials. Sour looks and cold cakes for breakfast have been faithfully resorted to as reformatory agents in his case, but without avail. Eight o'clock is his hour, and nothing can move him before that time on any working day. Regularly every Sunday morning, however, he gets up early enough to compensate for what Mrs. Wormlett terms his laziness during the remainder of the week. When others rise seasonably, Mr. Toplink dozes; but when laziness is popular, he bounds out of bed at dawn. Such is the eccentricity of genius.

The first thing Mr. Toplink does, on reaching the floor, is to put on his hat, and look at himself in the glass; after which, it is his picturesque custom to pace to and fro between the beds, in the twilight, like a ghost. Like a ghost as to apparel, but not as to speech. Mr. Toplink laughs and gossips with himself in his best-natured and most familiar manner. He also desires to know if his room-mates are awake, whispering their names alternately between the beds: "Leviston! Merrivale! I say, Leviston! 'Sleep, Merrivale? O, awake, are ye?" he adds, much relieved, as Martin turns over to avoid being disturbed any more. "Don't let me be in the way, if you want to go to sleep again. I would n't disturb you for the world. Leviston is fast asleep; an't ye, Leviston? Hollo! the sky is clear as a bell!" he continues, in a low voice, looking out of the window. "It 's going to be a beautiful day; an't ye glad? Never mind; you need n't answer me, if you 're sleepy. I wonder what cats made such a

noise at about two o'clock? There was a fire at half-past twelve — I 'd like to know where it was. Did n't you hear Crange go tumbling down stairs? I would n't be a fireman, like him, for any money."

Having by this time banished sleep from the pillows of his friends, much to his regret, he assures them, Mr. Toplink commences the duties of the morning. Seating himself, in the simple and unique attire of his shirt and hat, by one of the washstands, he begins the operation of blacking a row of boots brought from the closet and arranged in order at his left hand. For an hour his sleepy room-mates hear him saw away industriously with the brush, sucking in his breath between his teeth by way of accompaniment, and stopping only to spit upon the leather, or to make observations designed to interest his companions, — provided they are awake. Having polished the entire collection of boots, — a task he performs regularly every Sunday morning, and at no other time, — he makes an elaborate and extensive lather, and shaves himself under his hat before the broken looking-glass. This done, he devotes half an hour to his razor, — honing it, strapping it on the palm of his hand, splitting hairs with it, and wiping it carefully with a silk handkerchief before putting it away. The next half-hour is occupied in oiling, brushing and curling his hair, with which Mr. Toplink takes great pains. Then follows the ceremony of thorough ablutions with soap and water, succeeded by a critical examination of shirts, socks and dickeys, with a little mending here and there with bachelor's needle-and-thread, and an occasional sewing on of buttons.

By this time Mr. Flinks is stirring in the next room. Every Sunday morning, as regularly as Mr. Toplink blacks his boots, Mr. Flinks gets out his fiddle, screws it into tune, resins the bow,

and regales his fellow-boarders with "concord of sweet sounds." Mr. Flinks is not an accomplished artist. His violin practice is, in fact, limited to a single measure of a single tune. The first strain of "Bounding Billows" he plays once, twice, a hundred times, with incessant repetition, never arriving at cadence or pause, but frequently adding to the horror of the monotony by singing in unison,

"Mi, mi, fa, mi, re, re, mi, do,"

over and over again, over and over again, with not the slightest variation of any kind. Mr. Flinks has the ambition to be thought a great player; and, believing that the girls in the attics listen entranced to the exquisite strains of his violin, never fails to keep his chamber-door open during the musical season. The truth is, that "horrible fiddle," as it is called, has been voted a nuisance, repeatedly, by the unanimous voice of the boarders.

At half-past seven o'clock the "getting-up bell" rings. Soon after, the boarders begin to collect in the parlor, driving forth the shaking grandfather, whom they abhor. The room is cold, and everybody looks blue, except Mr. Winksworth, whose countenance — especially his nose — is constitutionally ruddy. It is the popular notion that he has taken something internally to keep him warm this morning; and Eliza, whom he attempted to kiss behind the door, declares that she smelt his breath. Mr. Longstalk, a lank and ghastly gentleman, walks the room to "keep up a circulation," rubbing his hands and shivering. Miss Dodge, on the other hand, a young lady of five-and-forty summers, who prides herself on her youthful spirits and warm blood, sits by an open window and talks of the beautiful fresh breezes.

Eight o'clock — the breakfast hour — approaches, and the boarders become voracious. Their conversation turns upon fish-balls and coffee. They allude censoriously to the tardy movements of the cook. They speak slightingly of the administration, and one inquires if anything is really gained by keeping boarders without their breakfast until the middle of the forenoon. Mr. Crange, the fireman, says he has been up since the alarm at half-past twelve, and is "nigh about starved." He means to sit down at the table the moment the clock strikes eight, whether the bell rings or not. The clock strikes; he puts his head into the dining-room, muttering; but, discovering Mrs. Wormlett in one of her sour and unhappy moods, his heart fails him, and he concludes to wait for the bell.

The bell rings at thirteen minutes past eight. The first faint rattle thereof, showing that it is in the hands of young Simeon, is the signal for a general rush. The clatter of chairs and the jingle of cutlery and plates resound simultaneously with the welcome ringing; and the famished boarders make eager incisions into the hot biscuit and tawny fish-balls, and whittle up the wabbling little balls of butter in a manner which would make a stranger stare. The butter is not the best the grocery affords, by many degrees of sweetness; the balls, moreover, are so arranged as to turn and slip under the knife as it chips out its modest little nips; yet they dwindle and decrease in a manner showing that the boarders are not at all fastidious about the quality of the article under discussion, nor in the least afraid to cut and come again. In the mean time the muddy coffee is received from the pantry, seasoned with coarse brown sugar and weak milk, and drank in solemn silence, broken only by the clicking of dishes.

Martin is in his place at the table, with Alice between him and

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the good Miss Tomes. Directly opposite sits the Rev. Mr. Mowle, a broken-down minister, with his wife. This couple are a study for the young author. During the week they are sociable enough — Mrs. Mowle especially, who is a rapid and vehement conversationist; but the long, sanctimonious faces they bring to the table on Sunday are simply ludicrous. The reverend gentleman is extremely pious and devout; yet, horribly dyspeptic as he is, self-denial in matters of eating and drinking is a virtue unknown to his poor stomach. He preaches you a dismal discourse on total depravity, this cheerful morning, with nasal twang and whine; and asks you "Why will you die?" at the same time eating hot biscuit and fish-balls, and drinking unwholesome coffee, which he knows will produce heartburn, constipation and headache. The Lord, he says, has seen fit to afflict him in a mysterious manner; and he delighteth in the catalogue of his physical ills, sent upon him by Providence for some wise purpose, which it is not for the understanding to question. Martin, who has been so bold as to suggest that his affliction cometh not so much from any special act of the Lord, as from the transgression of natural laws, is looked upon as sceptical; Mr. Mowle shakes his head at him, with much elongation of the corners of his mouth, and Mrs. Mowle inquires, with deep solicitude, if he has a praying mother. Miss Tomes, good creature, who has a dread of the least seeming impiety, is grieved to see Martin smile at this solemn question; for, although assured that he loves truth and reverences religion, and aspires to live a pure and blameless life, she fears that such levity will peril his soul.

Mr. Flinks is also at table. The air of "Bounding Billows" has proved a regular sea-breeze in sharpening his appetite. Like his fellow-boarders, he is silent for some time after sitting down;

but, after the second fish-ball, his thoughts flow forth in speech. He feels a contempt for the sanctimonious faces of "Rev. Mr. Mowle and lady," — as they announced themselves on applying to Mrs. Wormlett for board, — and is inclined to be facetious at their expense. The tide of indignation he turns from the sceptical Martin against himself by a wicked pun, whereat the red-faced Winksworth looks redder in the face than ever, by force of suppressed laughter, and Mr. Toplink chokes over his coffee. Others smile; even Miss Tomes bites her lips to preserve her gravity; but Mrs. Mowle turns up her eyes in holy horror, while her reverend husband, moved by a stern sense of duty, asks, in a voice of dolcful pitch, if his dear friend supposes such remarks can be pleasing to the Lord.

Mr. Wormlett sides with Mr. Mowle, and moralizes on the subject. He don't know that jokes indulged in on Sunday do a great deal of harm; but, as nothing is gained by them, as he sees, would n't it be as well to omit them? "They 're jest like swearing on other days," he goes on, jerking his head to one side, and elevating his knife. "I an't set nor bigoted; but I tell my boy not to swear. I says to him, 'What do you make by it?' I says. 'Money, or anything good to eat? No, Simeon,' I says; 'no such thing, Besides, it an't respectable; say nothing about the danger to your soul when you die. So, Simeon, my son,' I says, 'never swear;' and, I may add, never joke and laugh on the Sabbath. 'T an't no use; you don't make nothing by it; so don't run no resk; take example from your father, Simeon, and be thoughtful."

Simeon, who is waiting on the table, giggles, twitches, and spills some coffee from a cup over Mr. Leviston's leg. That misanthropic gentleman looks up suddenly with a fiery face, which

tickles Toplink excessively; but looks down again without a word, and wipes his trousers with his handkerchief, while Mr. Wormlett gravely reproves his son.

Mr. Agate, the printer, who is always late, now makes his appearance, looking haggard, and casts dark glances up and down the desolated table. The other boarders disperse, to meet again at dinner. Some sit in the parlor, others go to walk, and a few retire to their rooms to prepare for church. Miss Tomes attires Alice in the new dress she made for her last week, and asks her if she would like to go with her to Sunday-school.

"If you will not be ashamed of me," murmurs the child.

"Ashamed of you, dear creature!" exclaims that good Christian, with tears in her eyes, kissing Alice fondly.

Yet the book-folder has her share of pride, too, and is sensitive to appearances. Her homely form is arrayed in rustling silk for this Sabbath holiday, her rough hands are neatly gloved, and her plain face looks out from the pink lining and artificial flowers of a stylish bonnet. She carries her gilt-edged Bible with a dainty grace; but at the same time she leads blind Alice lovingly by the hand, and draws honeyed consolation from the thought that she — the book-folder — is not ashamed of one of Christ's little ones.

On the way down stairs, Miss Tomes knocks at Martin's door. She has before invited the young man to go to church with her, and now she wishes to tell him where he can find her, after the Sabbath-school. Martin laughs, and tells her he will not mortify her by walking into one of your fashionable places of worship with her in his seedy clothes. This reply is what she expected; indeed, meek and lowly as she is this morning, I am not sure but her face would take a hue of deeper crimson from her mortification than it does from her bonnet's lining, should the invitation be accepted.

"You should not stay at home from church on account of your dress," she says, with a benevolent smile.

Mr. Toplink overhears the remark; and, after she is gone, indulges in excessive merriment thereat.

"Don't think I mean to prejudice you," he says, "but, 'pon my word of honor, you could no more get that Tomes to church when she was n't looking jest so, than you can get a cat into a stocking. Only the Sunday before you came, she stayed to home all day for a little stain on her bonnet-ribbon, which nobody 'd ever have seen, if they had n't been looking for it. She discovered it after she got all dressed, and was too proud to wear it, and too conscientious to alter the rig of her bonnet on Sunday."

As for Toplink himself, you should see him in full dress! From the oiled curling of his hair to the polish of his boots, he is magnificent. His Sunday suit is in the extreme of fashion. What unexceptionable pants! What splendor of waistcoat and fob-chain! What an exquisite cut and finish you observe in that olive-colored frock! The slim Toplink is extensively padded, and the swell of his chest is marvellous. His cravat has an artistic tie, with vast extravagance of bows and ends; and the largest style of dickey envelops his chin. With his straw-colored gloves on, and with his dainty rattan carried genteelly in his fingers, he is the very ideal of dapper dandyism; and, conscious of his dazzling magnificence, he delights to strut about the room, and ask, carelessly, "Come, Merrivale, an't you going to church? What 's the use of being particular about dress?"

As Martin declined Miss Tomes' invitation, so he also declines that of his agreeable friend Toplink. But, when the latter is gone out, he dresses himself as neatly as possible, saunters forth, walks around the Common, and finally mounts the steps of

a handsome church. He waits some minutes for a seat. The sexton glances at his seedy coat and old white hat, and leaves him standing in the porch until the more elegant strangers visiting that place of worship have been shown to pleasant pews; then Martin is hastily seated in an obscure corner, between a bent old woman in faded black and a dilapidated gentleman with a broken nose. And there, in the midst of a cold and gloomy congregation, he listens to a sermon so formal and lifeless, that it seems a wicked thing to stay in doors to hear it, with God's bright sunshine and liberal air inviting the soul to worship in the woods and fields.

After meeting, Martin's seedy coat and old white hat may be seen in the midst of glossy beavers, rich broadcloths and glistening silks, as the throng of church-goers moves slowly down the street. Yet Martin is not ashamed; he glories in the thought that costly apparel would make him no better, and that poor clothes would make the showy crowd no worse. "True manhood is in the heart," he says, or thinks; "and this coat-worship is base. Why should I blush because I am meanly clad? Let me feel that my soul is arrayed in truth and purity, and I will stand nobly erect; I will be proud of this attire, which these false coat-worshippers despise."

Even while these fine sentiments throb in Martin's brain, his face suddenly flushes purple. He sees, coming directly towards him, the charming Sophronia and her mother, in silks and velvets magnificent. To escape is impossible. The blue eye of the charmer is upon him. She becomes rosy-complexioned, smiles, shakes her curls, and whispers to her mother. The young man is gracefully recognized; the ladies pass on; and he, all in a tremor of agitation, hastens around the corner, with a vague idea of

putting himself away somewhere out of sight. That poor old suit, of which he was feeling so manly proud a minute since — the burning consciousness that Sophronia and her mother have seen him wear it in the street on Sunday fills him with mortification. The human soul adores the absolute right, and in its calm moments despises mere appearances; but few of us are strong and courageous enough to live out our faith before the eyes of men. Martin, I candidly confess, was not.

Baked-beans, swimming in pork-fat, constitute the great Sunday-dinner in Mr. Wormlett's boarding-house. Of these the Rev. Mr. Mowle has decided not to eat; for last Sabbath they distressed him sore, and kept him from attending church in the afternoon. Seeing the other boarders partake, however, he thinks he may indulge sparingly, with impunity. A few harmless beans, therefore, he tastes, which prove so deliciously persuasive that he says to Mrs. Mowle "he don't feel as though another small spoonful would hurt him," and accordingly passes his plate for more. The devil is certainly in the beans, tempting the reverend; for the second spoonful proves more persuasive than the first; so that he tries another, and another, and another still; and finishes by eating more beans than any other man at the table. The consequence is a violent attack of indigestion, over which the sufferer groans and laments even unto the going down of the sun; and in compensation for which he orders a late supper sent to his room, and indulges in a large quantity of toast, several cups of tea, and—a few more beans.

At the dinner-table Mrs. Mowle inquires if Martin has been to church; and, on being told that he has, discovers evidence of improvement in the fact, and commends him with a real motherly spirit. Notwithstanding this encouragement, Martin goes not to

any place of worship in the afternoon, but spends the time in reading "The Banditti of the Cavern," a thrilling novelette, recommended by his obliging room-mate. Miss Tomes takes Alice out again. Mr. Toplink plays "High-low-Jack" with Mr. Crange, the fireman, in his room, with the door locked; and young Simeon looks through the key-hole and catches them at it. Mr. Winksworth sits in the parlor all the afternoon, as he did all the morning, looking over the top of a newspaper, watching and listening. Several of the boarders keep him company, idling away the hours over weak novels, in languid conversation, and in sleep. Mr. Longstalk and Miss Dodge, who occupy a corner of the sofa and have a great deal of whispering to do behind their hands, are sadly embarrassed by those pleasant eyes of his; but, if they look up, he looks down instantly, and appears innocently engaged in perusing the convenient newspaper.

Mrs. Wormlett works hard all day; the shaking grandfather prowls about the chambers and yard; while Mr. Wormlett walks solemnly to church with Simeon, moralizing profoundly by the way.

Thus the blessed Sabbath passes, and the evening ensues. There is a lively scene in the parlor, and Miss Dodge plays the accordeon for the entertainment of the company. Martin walks the streets, passing and repassing Mr. Dabney's house, and looking up at the windows, and returns home just as Mr. Winksworth is going out for the first time since yesterday. The latter invites him, in a confidential whisper, to go and "get a punch" with him; but Martin declines; and Winksworth, going alone, feels it his duty to drink punch for two until some time past midnight, when he comes home boozy, and, looking into the parlor, has the gratification of seeing

Mr. Longstalk alone with the ancient Miss Dodge, whose head is on his shoulder. After that, he ascends the stairs with slow and difficult steps, with his hand on the banisters, gets into bed between the feathers and straw, and drops down into a dizzy gulf of oblivion, spinning round and round like a top.

Martin retires in good season, but he does not sleep well. He hears Mrs. Mowle up with the reverend, who is groaning and moaning all night with internal pains. Mr. Toplink, who has been absent since tea, comes home at twelve, and chuckles and gossips with himself about the good time he has been having with the girls; until Martin, incensed, has some thoughts of getting up and smothering him with a pillow. Then there is an alarm of fire. At the first stroke of the bell, Crange, who sleeps in the next room, is heard to bound upon the floor and struggle into his pantaloons and boots. Before half a dozen strokes have sounded, he has jumped down stairs, taken two strides through the entry, pulling on his coat by the way, and slammed the hall-door behind him. Then his boots are heard running on the sidewalk below; the sounds die away in the distance; an engine rushes through the street, with noisy clang and clatter; and finally all is still. The wild ringing of bells all over the city, and the snarling of watchmen's rattles, has ceased; and a solemn hush pervades the streets, while the calm, white moonlight sleeps upon the roofs. Winksworth has retired; Toplink has talked and laughed himself asleep; the reverend has respite from groaning; and Martin, drowsing at length, dreams of hearing Caleb Thorne preach a funeral sermon over somebody in Mr. Toplink's trunk, while Miss Dodge plays on a sort of piano-accordeon, — an instrument with bellows as large as a cupboard, — and sings from a hymn-book containing Killings' Panorama songs.

XVI.

PROFESSIONAL PROGRESS.

EARLY Monday morning, the hopeful Martin set out to call on the publisher with whom he had left his Romance to be examined.

"Good-morning," said Mr. Dime, in a mumbling, melancholy tone, as the young author entered the bookstore. "You have come to see about that manuscript, I suppose."

Martin bowed, smiled cheerfully, and made a careless remark about the weather.

"These sudden changes use me up," replied Mr. Dime, dismally. "I've had a cold in my head nearly all the fall, more or less, and it is worse than ever this morning." He made a painful attempt to ventilate his nasal organ; but it was in so dreadful a condition that his face became purple under the operation.

"You expose yourself too much, possibly," suggested Martin.

"I don't think I do," replied the other, rubbing his fingers on

his boot-leg. "I 've worn an outside coat almost ever since the middle of September. I never go out in an east wind, if I can help it; and when I do, I take an omnibus."

"Perhaps you are too careful of yourself. Cold baths and out-door exercise might give a vigorous tone to your constitution."

"Cold baths and exposure in east winds would carry me out of the world pretty soon," said Mr. Dime, with a melancholy shake of the head. "I han't had time to look over your manuscript yet," he added, taking The Beggar of Bagdad from his desk; "besides, I han't felt like it, either."

"I am sorry," said Martin, with a disappointed look. "I was in hopes of raising a few dollars on it, this morning."

The publisher turned over the sheets and studied the chapter-headings for some moments, in silence.

"I don't know about taking hold of anything of this kind just now," he at length observed, in his most depressed manner. "I an't hardly decided yet."

Martin, vexed and impatient, replied promptly that, if such was the case, he would relieve him of the romance without more ado.

"If you 've a mind to let me keep it till day after to-morrow," said Mr. Dime, "I 'll try to read it by that time, and tell you what I 'm prepared to do about it."

Martin concluded to accept this proposition, and once more departed, leaving the Beggar of Bagdad in the hands of the melancholy publisher.

A few minutes later, he entered the office of the *Streamer of the Free*, and was complacently received by Mr. Drove.

"How is it about 'White Hairs'?" asked Martin, with a show of gayety, seating himself in a chair opposite the responsible editor.

"Your sketch," replied Mr. Drove, with his ready smirk, "has not been read. I left it here for my assistant, Saturday; but he did n't come near the office, and here it is yet."

Mr. Drove took the manuscript from a pigeon-hole in his desk, and glanced at the title, winking and nodding sagaciously, with his chin out. Martin's brows gathered, and he gnawed his lip in silence.

"A pretty fair title," Mr. Drove resumed. "We want something to catch the eye at the head of the column, you know. 'White Hairs and Auburn Tresses,' — that 'll pass. If I can get time, I 'll read it myself in a day or two. I find I can't place any dependence on my assistant, and — this is in confidence," said Mr. Drove, lowering his voice, — "I 've about made up my mind to git red of him. He 's a man of splendid talents! He 's Quintus Quilldriver."

He looked up with his old smirk to observe the effect of this bold announcement upon Martin; and Martin said,

"Is he, indeed?"

"A great genius!" pursued the responsible editor, with an expressive shake of his head. "But irregular — eccentric; in short, he sprees it."

"That 's bad," said Martin.

"If 't wan't for that, I would n't part with him on any account. He has immense ability. Why, sir, if he was a mind to, he could make the biggest reputation of any man in the country. He 's wonderful sharp. He comes in here along about ten o'clock, sometimes, and I say, 'Chaffer, you 're late; the printers want copy. Set right down and dash off a column of editorial, as soon as ever you can.' That 's the way I have to ketch him; and then I 'm sure of him. He 'll set down, without any study

'forehand, and git off them witty paragraphs of his, one after the other, never stopping till the work 's done. Drunk or sober, it don't make any difference, apparently; though I often think he does best when he 's a good deal over the bay."

Martin thought of Caleb Thorne, and asked, with earnest feeling, if there was no way to reform that better class of persons over whom the morbid appetite for drink has such power.

"I 'd like to have somebody try Chaffer's case," replied Mr. Drove, significantly. "I 've threatened to turn him off fifty times, but it don't do any good."

"He must be aware what ruin he brings upon himself, — is he not?"

"He knows all about that, you better believe! Why, he has sworn off from drink once a week, on an average, for the past year. Talk with him when he 's sober, and he 'll tell you what a fool he has been, and how much harm liquor has done him and his family, and pledge his word that he will never taste another drop. Meet him an hour after, perhaps. and he will be tight. Then he 's of a different opinion. Every man of genius drinks, the world over, he says. If he has asked me once, he has asked me a hundred times, 'what would Byron have done without gin?' He even likes to be pitied, and to have people say, 'What a splendid mind Chaffer has, if he would only let liquor alone!' Well, I 've give him up. Here my inside goes to press on Thursday, and there 's not a line of copy for the editorial columns, which ought all to be in type to-morrow. I write a good many articles, now and then," added Mr. Drove, with an air of importance; "but my time is exceedingly valuable, and it is cheaper to hire such work done, when I can. Have you ever written much on general subjects?"

"Never for the press; but I think I might be able to do what you want."

"Would you like to try your hand at a leader?"

"On what subject?"

"O, almost any subject of general interest. Make it pointed and pithy as you can, — eloquent and patriotic, you know. The *Standard of the Free* has been having a series of editorials on the 'Tyranny of Capital,' — a pretty taking sort of a subject. It won't do for us to be behind the *Standard* in such matters; so, supposing you write a scathing and fiery article, blowing up the rich and siding with the laboring classes? Them kind of articles tell first-rate; and there 's a chance now for you to lay yourself out on one. Make it brilliant, so 's 't Chaffer can't crow about it."

Martin agreed to undertake the leader. Thereupon Mr. Drove asked him how he would like to write a few puffs for the daily papers.

"Write what?"

"Puffs — notices of this week's *Streamer*, you know. I 'll show you."

Mr. Drove produced a blank book, and opened upon a page covered with brief newspaper paragraphs pasted in, and credited variously to the daily press.

"Chaffer was to have written the notices for this morning's papers. Our paper is out on Monday, and the advertisements ought to appear Monday morning."

"Some of these must have been written by the editors who printed them, I take it," said Martin, glancing his eye over the puffs. "This one, for instance, — 'The *Streamer of the Free*, for this week, is, by all odds, the best number of that best of papers

we have ever seen. The first-page story, entitled, 'The Mule-Driver's Oath; or, the Perilous Pass of San Satilla,' is truly a thrilling romance of love, treachery and revenge. The enterprising publisher, Mr. Drove, deserves great credit for his liberality in securing such writers for the *Streamer* as Robin Bowsprit.' These are voluntary notices by the editors, I suppose."

"Do they read like it?" asked Mr. Drove, chuckling.

"Certainly," said the unsophisticated Martin.

"It 's all right, then," observed Mr. Drove, with his chin out further than before. "That shows that they were well done. Do you think you can get up something in the same style? Make 'em read like genuine editorial notices, — disinterested compliments, you know."

"I should n't think the thing would be at all difficult."

"Chaffer says that puff-writing is an art by itself, — d' ye know it? You have to make your paragraphs terse and pointed, 'cause they have to be paid for at so much a line, you know; and people won't read 'em, if they 're long. I let you into our secrets a little," said Mr. Drove, complacently; "but of course this is between ourselves. Would you like to try your hand, now, at half a dozen puffs of this week's *Streamer*?"

"If there 's money to be earned that way," said Martin, with a smile of rather melancholy humor, "I am not in a condition to neglect the opportunity."

"Sit right up here, then, at Chaffer's desk, and let 's see what you can do."

"But I shall want to read this week's *Streamer* first, — shall I not?"

"What for?"

"To know what I am going to puff, to be sure."

"Nonsense," laughed Mr. Drove. "Chaffer says he can always puff best a thing he knows nothing about. Draw on your imagination. Say, 'It is a magnificent number. The *Streamer* of this week is truly a superb affair. The new novelette, continued from last week, promises to be the most brilliant romance ever published in America; it is by the author of the "Pirate's Royal Bride," whose services, we are glad to learn, have been secured by the praiseworthy proprietor of the *Streamer*, at an immense expense; and so forth, and so forth. The *Streamer* has distanced all competitors, and waves alone in its glory.' That 's the sort of thing we want."

Martin observed that he should think that, with his brilliant imagination, Mr. Drove would prefer to write the notices himself.

"I have my reasons," replied the responsible editor, winking, with a look of extraordinary sagacity.

"O!" said Martin. Having glanced unconsciously at a letter Mr. Drove was writing, and discovered certain inaccuracies of orthography and construction, he did not question the validity of those "reasons." Drawing his chair to the desk, he rubbed his temples for a moment thoughtfully, then dashed off half a dozen paragraphs with a rapidity and ease which gave the publisher an exalted idea of his literary abilities.

"Capital!" said Mr. Drove, as Martin finished reading what he had written. "That 's just the thing!"

Martin was laughing heartily. His friend desired to know what amused him.

"My unexpected success," he answered, with tears in his eyes. "To tell the truth, I thought the puffs mere burlesques. I tried

to see how ridiculous I could make them, without any idea that you would use them."

Mr. Drove was a little dashed by this frank confession. But, so far from being offended, as Martin had good reason to suppose he would be, he seemed only to conceive a still higher respect for his character and talents.

"Of course," he observed, with his chin out, smiling and laying his finger on the page of puffs, "they look ridiculous to you and me; but the masses won't see any fun in 'em. I shall use every one of these."

"For decency's sake, then," cried Martin, "let me alter the style of them a little. It is too absurd. 'In brilliancy of wit, overwhelming pathos and terrible dramatic power, Robin Bowsprit stands at the head of living writers,' — that 's awful!" he exclaimed, convulsed with mirth.

"It an't a bit too strong," insisted the responsible editor.

"But this," laughed Martin: "'The continued story is one of absorbing interest. The chapter entitled The Conflict in the Cave is decidedly the most fearfully thrilling and soul-harrowing narrative we have met with in the whole range of modern literature!'"

"It 's the best puff we have had in a month," said Mr. Drove, good-naturedly. "You are a fresh hand at it, and your new phrases will tell with the reader. Ah!" added the speaker, lowering his voice, "there comes Chaffer! Sit still; I'll introduce him to you."

But Chaffer was scarcely in a fit state to be introduced. He had a fine figure and an intellectual face; but his beard was unshaven, his dress was in disorder, the crown of his hat was broken, and there was an uncertain, swimming look in his eyes,

which betokened inebriation. His gait was also unsteady, and it seemed only by a strenuous effort that he was able to approach Mr. Drove and stop, without pitching over him headlong.

"Here I am!" said he, slapping his employer on the shoulder. "Prompt as the day!"

"Not quite," replied Mr. Drove, sarcastically. "You should have been here Saturday morning."

"Was n't I here Sa'd'y morn'n'?" demanded Chaffer, indignantly. "And, supposing I was n't? Would you deny a man — a man of genius, you un'stan' — a day's recreation, now and then?"

"Well, are you ready for work?"

"All ready! When there 's work to be done, Walter S. Chaffer 's on hand. I want you lend me a couple of dollars first, though. I must have a beefsteak and a cup of coffee b'fore I un'take do anything."

"I han't got two dollars to spare, I 'm sorry to say."

"See here, Mr. Drove!" exclaimed Chaffer, with a frown, steadying himself by the desk. "Look me i' the eye! You say you have n't got two dollars to spare?"

"Not this morning, Walter. Come," said Mr. Drove, coaxingly; "sit down and work half an hour; then we 'll go out together and get a lunch. But first let me make you acquainted with Mr. Merrivale, a new contributor."

The pugnacious Chaffer compressed his lips and shook his hand with a warning gesture at his employer, then turned and regarded Martin for a moment with a look of solemn scrutiny.

"Mist' Berryfiel', I 'm rejoice' t' know ye!" he cried, staggering forward and grasping the young man's hand. "You 're a true man, I know by your eye! I shall be happy to cullivate

your acquain'ce. Come, le' 's go out and get a drink. Not a word, my young frien'; come right along! You 'll lend me a couple of dollars, I know."

"My dear sir," replied Martin, with a good-humored smile, "I have n't a dollar in the world."

"I beg your pardon," said Chaffer, grasping his hand once more, "and I sympathize with you. You are an author?"

"I have made some attempt at authorship."

"Then it 's absurd to ask you to lend money. Authors are proverb'ally short. Look here, now, Mr. Drove! will you let me have the money? — that 's the question. I 'm going to treat my young friend."

"Excuse me," said Martin; "I never drink."

Chaffer raised his hand in an attitude which seemed to say, "I know all about that; so not a word;" and kept his swimming eyes fixed with a stern expression on his employer's face.

"I tell you I can't spare the money," said Mr. Drove.

"Then you and I are done!" exclaimed Chaffer, shaking his fist heavily. "That settles it. My shadow never 'll darken your floor again. And my soul from out that shadow that lies floating on the floor shall be lifted — nevermore! Wait for me five minutes, my young friend," he added, embracing Martin; "I 'll bo'r'r the money, and call at the door for ye."

Martin persisted in declining the kind invitation; but Chaffer put up his hand as before, in an attitude of friendly remonstrance, and went reeling out of the office.

"He has gone off so a dozen times before," said Mr. Drove, laughing. "He 'll be sober enough by about to-morrow morning to come back and go to work as if nothing had happened. You 'll bring in the leader as early as four o'clock?"

Martin promised, and took his leave. On his way to the office of the *Portfolio*, he unfortunately fell in with Mr. Chaffer, who recognized him, and stopped him in the street.

"Mr. Berryfield!" exclaimed that gentleman, with contracted features, extending his hand with a gesture intended to be very solemn and impressive, "I thought you were a friend of mine."

"So I am," said Martin.

"And you could n't wait for me five minutes! Is that friendship? Should Brutus Cassius answer Caius Marcus so?" cried Chaffer, dramatically.

"I 'm in a hurry, Mr. Chaffer."

"In a hurry? Where you going?"

"I 'm on my way to the *Portfolio* office."

"Good! Jus' the place I was thinking of going to. I want to see Killings. He 's a great fellow, Killings is."

"Do you think so?" asked Martin.

"I 'm bound to think so, if he 'll lend me five dollars. If he won't —" Chaffer snapped his fingers contemptuously, — "You un'stand. That 's what I think of Killings."

Martin was not at all pleased with his companion. But Chaffer was not to be got rid of easily. He clung to the young man's arm, and went staggering by his side along the street, shaking his fist and talking thickly.

"Are you a married man?" asked Martin, on the way.

"Yes, thank Heaven! I 've a wife and four honest, lovely babes, as the fellow says in the play. Some men think when they 're away from home they 're released from all mor'l obligations; but I don't. I 'm a marr'd man at home and abroad, — I glory to say it!" cried Chaffer, walking nobly erect.

"That 's right," responded Martin. "I 'm glad to hear it.

Those persons you speak of sometimes neglect their families. That noble wife and those four lovely babes of yours are more fortunate."

"See here," returned Chaffer, sternly. "I want to see your face. Did you mean to insinuate anything by that remark?"

"Look in my face, and see."

"I believe you 're a true man. I overlook the remark; though, Heaven knows," added Chaffer, with feeling, "I have n't always done my duty to my family."

"In all essential points I 'm sure you have. You have never left them to suffer from cold and want, whilst enjoying yourself abroad; and you are never anything but kind to them at home, I know," said Martin.

"No more! no more!" cried Chaffer, in maudlin accents, much affected. "You touch a tender spot. You bring up dark scenes in my history. You urge me to confess it; — I 've been a bad man, — I 'm a bad man to-day."

Chaffer began to weep. Martin was touched, yet he could not refrain from laughing.

"O, no; not a bad man," said he, cheeringly.

"A monster!" murmured the remorseful Chaffer. "If I should tell you how I 've blasted the life of one of God's noblest women, — but that 's a sacred page; it mus'n' be opened. Forgive me for mention'n' it."

"You exaggerate," replied Martin. "If you have ever appeared like the monster you call yourself, it has been owing to circumstances."

"Circumstances, — that 's the word. I don't believe I 've got a bad heart," said Chaffer, striking his breast. "No, sir! it 's circumstances. People say, There 's Chaffer, — he 's got a glo-

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rious soul and splend'd talents, if he 'd only let liquor alone. That 's just my case."

"Why don't you let liquor alone, then?"

"Let liquor alone! — I, a man of genius? — Impossible! I believe in the doctrine of compensation. Nature's gifts are always hedged round with penalties. If you have one blessing, there 's some affliction thrown into the other scale of the bal'nce, to make the equilibrium, you un'stand. So genius is accompanied with infirmity. Then, what 's the use for me to complain? I 've tried faithfully — yes, prayerfully — to put aside the fatal cup; but what 's the use of striving against destiny?" demanded Chaffer, stopping Martin with a jerk, and looking full in his face. "Answer me that question b'fore you stir another step."

"There is a destiny which shapes our ends," replied Martin.

"Well answered, — in the words of the sublime poet!" exclaimed Chaffer. "Aha! here comes Redwort — the glorious Ned Redwort. Redwort, I 'm enraptured! Shall I have the pleasure of making you acquaint'd with my particular friend — an aspirant for literary fame — Mr. Berryfield."

Mr. Redwort — a gentleman with long black hair, an iron-gray moustache, and a defective eye — greeted Martin in an off-hand, dashing style, and declared himself delighted to make the acquaintance of a brother author.

"Mr. Redwort is better known as Robin Bowsprit," suggested Chaffer.

"Robin Bowsprit — indeed!" said Martin. "Bowsprit is a familiar name."

"You are kind to say so," replied Redwort, with an air of indifference. "I have written a few trifles under that signature,

which somehow have attracted attention. I make not the least pretension to style; I tell a story on paper just as I 'd tell it to my messmates on shipboard."

"That 's the beauty of it," observed Chaffer. "You 're natural as the day 's long."

"How could I be otherwise? I never wrote a fictitious story in my life. Everything I describe I 've been through with myself. I 've seen more wild and exciting incident than a man could put on paper in a lifetime."

"Ned 's been all over the world," said Chaffer, aside to Martin. "He 's a great fellow."

"Mr. Berryfield reminds me — "

"Merrivale, if you please," said Martin.

"Merriville, — thank you for the correction. Your friend Merriville reminds me," resumed Redwort, "of an officer in the Brazilian service, — Colonel Rokee; we were like brothers together. He saved my life once in a skirmish, and I afterwards had the good fortune to return the favor. Have you read the cave scene in this week's *Streamer?* That 's an exact description of the fight in which I saved his life. Señor Rokero is the colonel, and Don Edwardo, who flings his arms about him, and receives the point of the dagger in his hand, as the robber is about to run him through the body, is myself. I can show you the scar," said Redwort, displaying a wound in his palm. "You are the very picture of the colonel," he added, turning the glassy glimmer of his defective eye on Martin. "Poor Rokee! he afterwards fell in battle by my side. We both went down together, our horses shot under us, and a whole regiment of Brazilian cavalry swept over us. When I came to my senses, I found myself in a gorgeous chamber in a Don Alvarez' villa; and when I asked for Señor Rokero, I was

told that he had been dead five weeks. All this time I had been taken care of by the beautiful Donna Inez, who figures in 'The Saintly Assassin; or, the Stiletto and the Cross,' which ran through six numbers of the *Streamer*. Poor Inez! she left her father's estates to follow my fortunes, and died of a fever, six months after, at Havana. I have described the death-scene, and the arrival of her father in pursuit just as she breathed her last, in 'The Stolen Bride of the Sierras,' published in the *True Standard*."

Redwort stroked his iron-gray moustache, and regarded Martin complacently, to observe the effect of his confessions on his new acquaintance.

"You have written a great deal for the newspapers, I should judge," observed Martin.

"Rather so," returned Redwort. "I 'm Bowsprit in the *Streamer*, Jack Mizzen in the *Standard of the Free*, Don Marvello in the *True Standard*, and Don Edwardo Redvorto in the *Portfolio*. Besides this, I write letters in Spanish for three papers in South America, and correspondence for other papers all over the United States. I 'm a contributor to *Blackwood*, too; Professor Wilson being a particular friend of mine. I write eighty foolscap pages a day, on an average. Come, boys," added the great Bowsprit, taking Chaffer by the arm to steady his irregular steps, "let 's go to Smith's to celebrate this meeting, and drink to the success of Mr. Merriville."

"Spoken nobly! — like Ned Redwort!" exclaimed Chaffer.

Martin, however, declined the invitation and the honor.

"You must come," insisted Chaffer, solemnly; "or I shall be offended."

"Come, if you don't drink anything," added Bowsprit. "I

want to show you where I had my skull broke, in the fight I told you about, where the cavalry swept over us."

"There 's a seam across the back of his head you can lay your finger in," said Chaffer, in a mysterious growl.

Martin had seen enough of a certain low kind of dissipation to loathe and abhor it; and all the persuasive eloquence of his new friends was insufficient to induce him to accompany them to "Smith's." Perceiving his determination, they finally released him; and while he hastened to the office of the *Portfolio*, Chaffer staggered into the nearest alley, on the support of the redoubtable Redwort's arm.

Killings received our author with distinguished patronage.

"I was away when you called on Sanurnay," said he, through his nose; "but I have taken occasion to look over the song and the sketch you left. The song is n't quite as good as the other — do you think it is?" he asked, with a pleasant grimace.

"I thought it was better," replied Martin, modestly.

"O, I don't find fault with it," Killings hastened to say; "though I think it doubtful whether I make use of it," in a discouraging tone. "What — a — that is, how much — did you intend to charge me for it?"

Martin, disheartened and disgusted, answered, that he had no idea of fixing a price on such trifles.

"Sumposing, then, I should say amout fifty cents — "

"Fifty cents for two songs!"

"Two? — ah, yes; but I thought you gave me the first one," said Killings, in a fawning manner. "Well, say a dollar, then, — will that be about the right thing?"

"If that is all the songs are worth to you, I am satisfied,"

said Martin, with a red, perspiring face. "I leave it all to your generosity."

"I am afraid you are not satisfied," resumed Killings, with an anxious look. "But I will make it all right with you, some time. I shall want to employ you regularly," he added, in a whisper, behind the editor's back, "when the *Portfolio* comes into my hands. The sketch you left is admirably written. You have a decided genius for humorous description."

"I am glad you like it," said Martin, encouraged.

"It 's not just what I wanted, however. You don't make your hero quite enough of a wag to make it an omject for me to pay a high price for it. I 'll take it of you, though, seeing I engaged it. Will a dollar and a half be a fair price? I 'll pay you more for the others, you know; and I shall take a good many of you, promably, in the course of the winter."

"A dollar and a half, did I understand you?" articulated Martin, with a sickening sensation.

"Yes — a dollar and a half; and I 'll have it printed in the *Portfolio*, with a complimentary notice of the author," returned the magnanimous Killings, with his pleasant grimace. "That makes two dollars and a half. Can you break an X?"

Martin could not, of course; and Killings, who probably anticipated as much, made the circumstance an excuse for paying him in small change, received at the door of his "Panorama."

Opening a leather pouch, taken from the safe, he counted out forty antiquated fourpences, nearly every one of which was worn smooth, and tendered them to Martin on the crown of his hat. With an expression in which a sense of the ludicrous and a feeling of despondency were blended, the author of the Beggar of

Bagdad held his handkerchief; the jingling silver was emptied into it; he tied it up in a little ball, and struck it on his knee, to hear its musical chink; and thus, with sensations he little expected to experience on that great occasion, he carried off his first pecuniary fee earned in the sacred and exalted literary profession.

XVII.

THE FATE OF THE BEGGAR OF BAGDAD.

PUNCTUAL to his engagement, Martin called on Mr. Drove in the afternoon, and read to him three articles designed for the editorial columns of the *Streamer*.

'Quite respectable," said the publisher, nodding and winking, as usual. "I will use one of them this week, and keep the other two for future emergencies, if you say so."

"I could n't have asked anything better," replied Martin, gratified, "for I am decidedly hard up, as the saying is."

"Our rule is to pay for articles when published," observed Mr. Drove.

Martin was astonished and indignant; but, managing somehow to suppress his feelings. he made a simple statement of his case to the responsible editor, and appealed to his generosity.

"I borrowed five dollars on Saturday which MUST be returned this evening," he said, with passionate earnestness, and with tears in his eyes. "I raised a part of it this morning; and, if you can

possibly spare me three dollars, I shall remember the favor with gratitude."

Mr. Drove said that he had his regular bills to pay, and that he could not advance money on articles without great inconvenience. However, if Martin chose to accept of three dollars as payment in full for the three editorials, the sketch of "White Hairs and Auburn Tresses," and the puffs for the daily papers, he did n't know but he could let him have the money. The young author, who expected not less than ten dollars, at the lowest estimate, for his labors, looked aghast at the proposition. How Mr. Drove could have made it, immediately after hearing those brilliant and glowing articles on the "Tyranny of Capital," "Injustice to the Laborer," and the "Meanness of Employers," was a mystery. But he had made it; he had no better terms to offer; and the exasperated Martin was compelled to receive his petty fee from the hand which he could have spat upon in his burning sense of wrong. What rendered the humiliation the more bitter was the fact that Mr. Drove, smiling, nodding and winking, patted Martin on the shoulder, and seemed to consider that he was doing him an extraordinary favor.

One source of satisfaction, however, Martin had, which almost compensated him for the disappointment and chagrin which he had that day been led to suffer. The money, loaned him by the good Miss Tomes, which had already occasioned him a world of uneasiness, causing him to feel like a thief and a swindler, he was able now to return; and, in the joyful sense of freedom attendant upon that happy circumstance, he resolved never again, on any account, to make use of the hard-earned wages of a poor book-folder. In all his life he had not felt so anxious about the future, nor experienced such a morbid fear of death, as during the last eight-and-

forty hours, when tortured by the thought that some unforeseen calamity might clip his thread of existence, or paralyze his efforts, and thus prevent the honorable restoration of the precious little sum which weighed so heavily upon his conscience. Once he came near being run over by an omnibus. "What if I had been killed!" thought he, with a shudder, his mind reverting immediately to Miss Tomes. "I must manage to pay her, before I cross the street again."

The first thing he did, therefore, on leaving the office of the *Streamer*, was to find a broker, sell his forty fourpences, received from Killings, and buy a five-dollar note. This done, he had enough change left to pay Mr. Toplink's washerwoman for doing up two shirts and a pair of socks, and also to make a modest purchase of fruit for Alice and Miss Tomes.

The week, thus commenced, proved to be one of sore trouble and distress. All Martin's endeavors to earn money were fruitless. Moreover, Mr. Dime, the book-publisher, neglected to read the manuscript of the Beggar of Bagdad, with the exception of a few pages here and there; and, with his characteristic indecision, continued to put Martin off, alleging, in melancholy tones, that the publication of new books was attended with such risks that he still wanted a day or two to make up his mind on the subject. On Friday, however, in consequence of Martin's earnest solicitation, he advanced five dollars on the romance, with great reluctance and many groans, so that the young man was saved the mortification of being dunned again by Mr. Wormlett.

In the mean time, Martin wrote sketches, and endeavored to sell them to the weekly newspapers. But he met with little encouragement, and with no satisfactory success. One editor read a story he left with him, and approved of it, but could not afford to pay for

it. Another rejected a carefully-written manuscript, because it was not sufficiently thrilling and dramatic for his columns. One sketch was refused because it was too long, and one because it was too short, while the third was politely returned with the remark that it was void of merit.

And so Martin, driven to a point of desperation which he had never reached before, went home one day, nearly three weeks after his arrival in town, sick at heart, crushed in spirit, and utterly hopeless of success in the literary profession.

He entered his room, and, to his surprise, found Alice sitting before a grate full of blazing coal.

"Where did you get this fire, my little fairy?" he asked, in a tone half playful and half sad.

"You cannot guess!" exclaimed the happy child. "Is n't it nice? The days are getting so cold now."

"Is it Mrs. Wormlett's doings?"

"O, no,—not exactly. I 'll tell you. I heard somebody come into the room, and thought of course it was you; and said, how sorry I was that you were obliged to sit and write here in the cold; I suppose I cried a little too; for I had been thinking how hard you have to work, and how much trouble you have—"

"Why, Alice," said Martin, pressing the child's cheek, "I am getting along bravely. By next week, or the week after, I shall be earning something—if ever. But tell me who it was that came into the room."

"I did not know at first; although I might have told well enough, if I had not been worrying so all the morning."

"Worrying, my dear child?"

"I had been thinking how everything has seemed to go wrong with me since my mother died. O, I was very naughty; I hope

my poor father will forgive me for having selfish thoughts, when I should only have loved him the more, and prayed for him the more."

"Darling heart! don't cry now. You have loved your father, and prayed for him, like a little angel, as you are! And you may love him and pray for him still; and we will hope that we may find him before many days; but do not worry about him, nor about yourself, nor about me. Come, cheer up, and tell me where the fire came from. Ah! how good it seems to sit down by it with you!"

The heart of Alice was cheered, and she made haste to tell her story.

"The person did not say anything — whoever it was — when I spoke so; and then I knew it was not you, but Mr. Leviston. I was sorry I said what I did, for he went away as if he was angry. But in a little while Mrs. Wormlett came in and made the fire; it was for Mr. Leviston, who had come home sick, she said; and she told me I had better go up stairs, or down to the kitchen, for he would not want me in the way. I said I would; but he met me at the door, and led me back, and made me sit down, and told me I might stay here all day if I liked. He sat down too, — not very near me, though; and he did not say anything; but now and then I heard him sigh — O, so pitifully! Then I felt that he was very unhappy; and I saw that there was so much goodness away down in his heart, covered up! and I thought you did wrong to dislike him, without understanding him better; and before I knew what I was doing, I had got down at his feet, and was crying for him, more than I ever cried for myself in my life. The next I knew, he had taken me on his knee, — who would have thought I could ever sit on his knee? —

and I was telling him things which seemed to come to me, and say themselves, — for I am sure I did n't know what I was talking about."

"And what did you tell him?" eagerly asked Martin.

"I told him how all his life long he had met with disappointments; how hungry his heart had always been for love, and how the world had given it stones instead of bread. I saw a picture for him too. He was making preparations for a journey. He went out of a grand city, which seemed to be the world, and put all his treasure on board a beautiful ship. But he had still one friend left in the city; and he went and told him what he had done. Then that friend set out by night and stole his treasure, and took possession of the ship, and went a mad, wild, wicked voyage in her, and finally left her a wreck upon a desolate shore. When I said the name of the ship was *The Clara*, Mr. Leviston held me out from him with his hands; he trembled all over; and I could *feel* his eyes looking into me. I wonder if I told him anything that ever really happened?"

"Mr. Toplink says that Leviston was once engaged to be married," said Martin, "and that his intended bride ran away with a friend of his."

"That must be what it all meant!" exclaimed Alice.

"Did he say anything?"

"Not then; but he sobbed for a long time. At last he became quiet; and he told me that I had done him more good than all the ministers he had ever heard preach. It was very strange; for I had only just been telling him that suffering had made him feel more deeply than other people; and that, while he thought he hated everybody, and tried to hate everybody, he had a whole ocean of love shut up in his heart."

"My little angel!" said Martin, tenderly; "how do you manage to make every one that comes near you better and happier?"

"Do I?"

"Indeed you do, my child. You think you are a great trouble to me; but let me tell you that you have been my guardian angel. Your influence is so purifying and softening, Alice, even when you do not speak; and when you do, I derive comfort, and strength, and encouragement, from your words. When I come to you full of bitterness, you make me overflow with love."

"Don't tell me that," murmured Alice, weeping; "for I know it can't be so; I am such a weak and foolish child!"

"Weak and foolish? I only wish a few more persons I could name were weak and foolish just the same! Your little heart is a fountain of love, — not a mere cistern, with walls of selfishness, holding so much and no more, but a spring, whose sources reach deep down into the infinite love of God. This is the secret of your character, Alice. You are so simple, and humble, and so truly pious, that, if there is such a thing, the Holy Spirit moves within you, when you speak; just as the winds of heaven blow amid green leaves, making music. O, my child! you shame me for my narrow and selfish thoughts. You make me blush for my disobedience to the spirit which is within me, as within every man whom God has formed in his image. You interpret to me the character of Christ, — so ineffably grand and lovely, that, when I think of him, I want to throw myself upon my face and cover my head with ashes. You awaken within me longings which lift my soul high above all the meannesses of this outside life. Yet I am miserably weak!" said Martin, mournfully. "I feel in my heart that there is but one thing absolutely beautiful, and that is truth. I know — I am assured that there is but one king-

dom worthy of man's ambition, and that is the heaven of love within the soul. For these I resolve to strive continually and forevermore. When I am by your side, I wish for nothing else. But there are clamorous voices at my gate; the world calls to me, and I go out, and lose myself in the games it makes me play, and become frivolous, mean and infidel, like the world. What a life I have led since I have known you! What people I have met! With what base labors I have soiled my hands! It seems that all the hours of Sabbath peace I have enjoyed, I owe to you."

Alice hid her face in Martin's bosom, and answered only with sighs of gratitude and love.

"If there was a little of your spirit in the world, my child!" he continued. "Only in two or three do I find anything at all like it; while, on the other hand, it seems to me that such men as Mr. Wormlett and Mr. Killings are utterly devoid of souls."

"Don't talk so, — don't feel so!" pleaded Alice. "I am sorry for Mr. Wormlett. O, I could forgive him for anything he might do to me. I have heard you say yourself that a person born with such a disposition, and educated like him, could not be different."

"True," said Martin. "There are two grand factors of every man's character; his birth and the circumstances by which he is surrounded."

"Then is not the bad man to be pitied and loved, rather than hated?" quietly asked Alice.

"To be sure. But it requires such love as few men have ever conceived of, to love our enemies. Had I your heart, my child, perhaps I might love Mr. Wormlett, — even Mr. Killings."

"When you said you doubted if they had souls, I saw a picture so distinct and clear, that I seemed to comprehend the whole

of it in an instant. There were great crowds of people passing in the streets. Some were finely-dressed, and many were in rags; but I could look through their clothes, and through their faces and forms; and in the brain of each I saw a light, like a star. In some it was blue, in some it was yellow, or green, or red. Now and then it was bright, and pure, and dazzling, and it gave a beautiful light all around. But in a few it was so dim and misty that it was scarcely to be seen; yet it was in the darkest, and nothing could put it out. One thing was singular. The clothes, whether finery or rags, made no difference with the star; for it often appeared brightest under the poorest dress."

"The star is the soul," said Martin; "and the darkness is the cloudy selfishness which benights the mind. How dim and misty must be the light in some whom I could name!"

"It is their misfortune," murmured the child. "I see angels blowing away the clouds, and kindling the star in all, with their breath. It brightens, and brightens, — O, how beautiful!" Her features lighted up with an ecstatic smile. "It makes me glad and happy, for this is something that is to be. The star will burn out clear and bright in every one, some day."

At that moment Leviston, who had been standing in the door, came forward softly, and, with a gentle touch, laid his hand upon the child's fair head.

"Some good little angel has been blowing the clouds away from my heart, and kindling the star, which was almost dead," said he with suffused features.

Martin arose, shook hands with his room-mate, and endeavored to speak to him; but his heart was too full for words, and the emotion visible in his face was left to express his sympathy. In a moment, however, he made an effort, and, with a tremulous smile

and tearful eyes, managed to tell Leviston that he was sorry to learn that he was ill.

"I am better now," said the latter. "There was too much pent up here," laying his hand upon his breast. "The door has been flung open for the first time in years, and this child has walked in among the cold damps with a sheaf of sunbeams."

Leviston's great heart seemed quite melted; and the light of those sunbeams still shone in his reserved and moody face.

"I hope we shall know each other now," returned Martin.

"I hope we shall. I have often wished that we were friends, Mr. Merrivale; for it has seemed to me that you are not like other men. But I have shut out all the world from my heart so long, that I could not let you in; nor was I sure that you would enter, if invited. I was conscious of appearing in an ugly character to you."

"Alice's sheaf of sunbeams shows you as you are. Here is my hand again. Thank you, — thank you!" murmured Martin, as Leviston embraced him cordially; "I have been so much in need of such a friend!"

Leviston's eyes overflowed. Half ashamed of his emotion, he turned away, and began to poke the fire vigorously; after which, he fumbled in his pockets for some moments in an embarrassed manner, looking as if there was something he wished to say, but did not know how to express it. Suddenly he relieved himself by taking out his pocket-book, and thrusting it abruptly into Martin's hand.

"There!" said he; "that's what I mean. I shall feel better now. Help yourself, and oblige me."

"No, no! This is too much. I can't stand this," articulated Martin, returning the pocket-book.

I do things rudely," replied Leviston, in a low tone. "It is my way; so don't be offended. I know what you need at the present time more than anything else; so I put my pocket-book in your hands, without any words, just as a friend should have a right to do."

"This kindness!—it is something I am not accustomed to," said Martin, wringing his hand again. "I don't know how to take it, or what to say. But I believe you sincere, and I will tell you frankly how I am situated. To-morrow my board-bill comes due; and how I shall pay it I do not know, unless I accept the money of you. So, if you will lend me five dollars — "

"Five dollars? I don't believe I 've got five dollars," responded Leviston, bluntly.

"O, well — never mind," faltered Martin.

"I will see." Leviston opened a small roll of bank-notes. "No, I have not a five; nothing smaller than tens; and I insist on your taking at least two of these, so that you won't forget to return the loan, some day, — ten is so small a sum."

"Ah, Alice!" said Martin, his heart all stirred within him, "how much I owe to you! This is a friend indeed whom you have brought me." The blind girl nestled to his bosom, weeping with deep joy. "It will be paying you a poor compliment to thank you, Mr. Leviston."

"I am glad you think so. And we pay human nature a poor compliment," added Leviston, with something of his old bitterness, "when we look with surprise and distrust upon trifling acts of friendship, as if they were something quite out of the common course of events. So, if you would please me, make use of my purse as freely as if it were your own."

"If I promise you that," cried Martin, "you must let me

off with ten dollars to-day. I dare not trust myself with more."

Martin was decided, and Leviston permitted him to have his own way. Thus, between those two individuals, so unlike in disposition, tastes, temperament, everything, there was established a strong magnetic current of sympathy and friendship, whose circling forces flowed to each from the mighty little love-battery of the blind girl's heart.

With the ten dollars obtained from his new friend, Martin, on the following morning, paid a week's board, and also redeemed the manuscript of the Beggar of Bagdad, left in the hands of Mr. Dime. The latter had "just about decided" not to publish the romance, and was feeling anxious concerning the sum he had advanced on such poor security; but the moment our author, impatient of delay, refunded the money, and took the manuscript under his arm to carry it away, the bookseller appeared to change his mind. The idea struck him that he was about to lose a popular and profitable book, which some more sagacious publisher was eager to obtain. He accordingly called Martin back, asked him if he thought he could do better than leave the romance with him a few days longer; talked as encouragingly about undertaking its publication as he could possibly do without committing himself; and, unrolling the manuscript once more, glanced his hungry but doubting eye over the bill-of-fare set forth in the chapter-headings. Martin brightened a little at this; but soon, perceiving that no definite arrangement could be made with such a weak and wavering mind, he resolved to waste no more words on the subject, and hurried abruptly away.

Mr. Dime's suspicions were, in fact, correct. Martin had in view a publisher for the Beggar of Bagdad. That publisher was

Mr. Drove, of the *Streamer of the Free.* He had proposed to Martin to write a novelette for his paper; and, on hearing the story of the Oriental romance, had expressed a curiosity to see it. Into his hands, therefore, Martin delivered the immortal manuscript, and was told that in three days he should know its fate.

At the appointed time he returned to the office of the *Streamer.* He found Mr. Drove at his desk. Mr. Chaffer, the assistant, who had some time since quietly resumed his editorial duties, was also present. Martin received a complacent smile from the former, who was always patronizing, and a slight nod from the latter, who was generally cold and reserved, except when his heart had been opened with a corkscrew; and sat down to hear what was going to be done with the Beggar of Bagdad.

"Was you aware," began Mr. Drove, producing the manuscript, "that your story is about twice as long as it should be for our columns?"

"I was not; but I am not surprised," replied Martin, with sad humor. "The fates are against it. I knew well enough that you would find some insuperable objection to it."

"O, it 's no objection, — it 's rather an advantage."

"How so?" asked the eager author.

"You see, our readers want everything condensed, rapid, dramatic. Take any ordinary novel, and cut it down one-half, and it 'll be twice as good as it was before."

"Do you propose to have the Beggar of Bagdad cut down?"

"Why not? We never run a story over six weeks, and yours would occupy at least twelve numbers — that 's three months. Now, if you strike out the weakest parts, and all the descriptions — "

"But the descriptions, — they are the finest part of it!"

"They 'd better be out, though; nobody cares for descriptions. Our readers want incident and plot, — the more the better. So, if you can condense your story one-half, and preserve all the pith and point, I think I 'd buy it of you. Chaffer has read it, and says it 's good, only spun out."

Martin's face darkened, and he looked down moodily for some seconds. At length, with a desperate air, he struck the manuscript, and turned to Mr. Drove.

"Supposing I condense it — what will you give me for it?" he demanded. "That 's the question!"

Mr. Drove wanted him to set a price.

"Very well; I 'll say a hundred dollars."

"A hundred dollars!" repeated the publisher, with a sarcastic grin.

"I understand that that is the ordinary price for novelettes," said Martin. "Mr. Redwort told me, the other day, that he never wrote one for less."

"Redwort tells a big story once in a while, I suppose you know. A hundred dollars! — he never received fifty for any novelette he ever wrote. Between you and me, I bought the 'Mule-Driver's Oath' of him for fifteen dollars; and he was glad to get that for it."

"I don't see how he can write for so little, and earn, as he says he does, four thousand dollars a year."

"Four thousand!" Mr. Drove, for the first time in Martin's presence, actually laughed aloud. "I 'll bet a hat that Ned Redwort never received four hundred dollars for writing in his life! At any rate, he is always so hard up that he will sell his manuscripts for what he can get, if it is n't a tenth part what they 're worth."

"But he has an estate in Brazil — "

"About as much as I have. Ask Chaffer what he thinks."

"Redwort — are you talking about him?" spoke up Chaffer.

"Yes; you introduced me to him, you remember," replied the verdant author.

"Did I! O, it seems to me I have some faint recollection of the circumstance. I can't guess how I came to, for I scarcely know him. I have heard him relate the most unique and extravagant stories about himself, however, that ever man invented."

Martin was perplexed. Mr. Drove came to his relief.

"Chaffer," said he, in a whisper, "probably introduced Redwort to you when he was tight. He is friendly to every one who will drink with him, when he is in liquor; and Redwort would be glad enough to treat him. Chaffer reads the manuscripts, you know, and probably Redwort thinks it pays to help him get drunk."

"Well," cried Martin; "to return to the novelette. What am I to expect for it, if I abridge it for the *Streamer?*"

"I'll pay you a fair price for it, — say about — about, — what would you say to fifteen dollars?"

"I would burn it first!" exclaimed the impetuous Martin. "Fifteen dollars!"

It was certainly a mean sum to offer to one who had expected to make a fortune out of his romance while writing it. The young man's face flamed up hot and red with shame and indignation.

Mr. Drove, who liked nothing better than to banter about a few dollars, began thereupon to talk of money, reputation and authorship, in a manner which recalled forcibly to Martin's mind the necessity of selling his romance for something, however small the price it would command. He accordingly concluded that,

rather than burn it, he would "cut it down" to the prescribed dimensions, and sell it to Mr. Drove for thirty dollars, which was that gentleman's last and highest bid.

"By the way," said the publisher, as Martin was about to depart, "I shall want you to get a more taking title. 'Beggar of Bagdad' is tame. Call it 'Alphiddi, the Disguised Prince,' or something of that kind, — startling, you know, — for the reader to ketch at. 'The Disguised Prince: or, the Mysteries of Venice,' — how 's that?"

"The scene is laid in Bagdad, not Venice."

"You can change it to Venice, easy enough. Venice sounds a great deal the best for a romance. All you 'll have to do will be to alter the word Bagdad to Venice, and the what-do-you-call-it river to the something-or-other sea."

Dumb with amazement, poor Martin looked at Mr. Dröve, to see if he was in earnest. The latter was never more so in his life.

"I guess I 'll burn the manuscript, after all," said the young man, with a sickly and feeble laugh. "But no!" he added, quickly; "I may as well go through with the farce, now that it is begun. I will make a thrilling title for you, and the scene of the story shall be in Venice. I shall like it better, now I think of it; for, to tell the truth, I am quite sick of Bagdad."

Our author spent the remainder of that day and a part of the next in "cutting down" the great Oriental Romance. Passages which had been composed in his most inspired moments he coolly sacrificed to the requirements of Mr. Drove. Descriptions brilliant, glowing, magnificent, which he had taken days to elaborate, he destroyed at a stroke. A hundred soft, delicate and poetical phrases, which he had put into the charming Lillifoo's mouth, he now put

into the fire. Alphiddi's burning declaration of love, too, became mere burning paper. The magic garden was pressed into a paragraph; its innumerable circling paths were brought into a line, and all that was left of the curious animals therein confined was a mere scratch of the pen. In like manner, the heroine's enchanted chamber went up the chimney with the sheets that contained the sleeping beauty.

This was a painful task for our author, but he performed it faithfully. Notwithstanding all the discouragement and chagrin which had followed the "Beggar of Bagdad," he found him a dear old friend still, — an actual existence, whom he loved with all his faults. Yet with ruthless hand he stripped him of his wealth of imagery and words; he hurried him, a poor exile, from his native city, and dropped him in the streets of Venice. In place of the glorious story-telling brotherhood of Bagdad beggars, he gave him Italian lazzaroni for companions. Ah! but it grieved his heart to subject his great romance to these changes; he came upon eloquent passages, which he could hardly make up his mind to destroy; many were the brilliant pages he read aloud to Alice, with mournful pleasure, previous to committing them to the flames; but the paltry remuneration must be earned, — there was no alternative, — and the task — as said before — was faithfully performed.

In this new disguise Martin carried the "Beggar of Bagdad" to Mr. Drove, and demanded his reward.

"My dear sir," said the complacent publisher, "I think I told you our rules. We pay for matter when published."

Martin was incensed. He snatched his romance from Mr. Drove's hand, and flung it into the stove. Fortunately there was no fire; Mr. Drove rescued it, and began to parley; and the furious author, being reminded of his poverty, smothered the

flames of his wrath, and compromised the matter by accepting twenty-five dollars in cash for the mutilated manuscript, and giving a receipt "in full of all accounts."

Such was the fate of the "Beggar of Bagdad." The great Oriental Romance dwindled into an insignificant novelette; the author's fame reached never beyond the circulation of the *Streamer of the Free;* and the wealth which had filled the fertile future, in his imaginative brain, diminishing like an estate in chancery, became at last a tangible paltry sum, insufficient to pay two months' board. And this is the story of that fine airy castle Martin Merrivale built. How many another has been reared like his, in golden skies, with banners floating in soft southern breezes, to meet, like his, disastrous and ridiculous downfall! But arise, O ye castle-builders, and despair not! Build and build again, on better foundations, and with nobler aims; and, though failure follow in your track, ye shall approach nearer and nearer that ideal which genius sees and pursues with immortal longings evermore, but never grasps.

XVIII.

MR. TIPLILLY'S CONNECTIONS.

WITH twenty-five dollars in his possession, Martin Merrivale was a rich man. That little sum consoled him for past trials; it cast a golden light upon his future. He paid all his debts; made Miss Tomes a handsome present; purchased several little delicacies and comforts for Alice, and — that was the last of his twenty-five dollars.

One other present Martin made, which should not be forgotten. In sending to Mrs. Dabney for his trunk and clothes, his heart was too full of benevolence and love to all God's creatures to admit a single vindictive thought against that excellent woman. A veil of charity covered her image, softening its asperities, as nets of haze make rugged mountains smile; so his jubilant soul decreed a gift to cast a cheering sunbeam upon her darkened state. It was a new shawl, the best he could afford to buy, and one indeed of which the plain Mrs. Dabney might be proud.

With it he sent a letter, brim-full of the kindest feeling, with not an allusion from which the widow could infer that a shadow of resentment rested on his heart. Before it was sealed, he read it to Alice, to learn if her susceptible mind could discover any acerbity in it; and the tender-hearted child, affected to tears, threw her arms about his neck, and asked him where he got the love that had enabled him to write such a letter.

"I do not know," replied Martin; "but of one thing I am sure, — I could not have written it before I knew you."

There was one mischievous thing in the letter, which made Alice laugh, — Martin sent his love to Cheesy.

Brighter prospects dawned upon our author. He did not, it is true, make much out of Mr. Drove, and all the fine promises of the magnanimous Killings proved false and hollow. But one day he called on the publisher of the *True Standard*, and offered him a roll of manuscripts for sale. It was a last resort; for he had heard Mr. Dillistone spoken of with contumely by Ned Redwort. He discovered a tone of deep and kindly feeling, however, beneath the publisher's plain and unaffected exterior; he fell into conversation with him; and, on going away, he had good reason to believe that he had made a friend. So it proved to be; a valuable friend, too, was the blunt Dillistone; for his treatment of Martin was not only manly and generous, but, with much good advice on the subject of writing for newspapers in general, he gave him particular encouragement — and remuneration no less — to write for the *True Standard*. Through Mr. Dillistone, our author made the acquaintance of Mr. Bangy, of the *Weekly Budget*, a genuine humorist, world-renowned; a man of a large body, and a soul larger still, full of that magnetism of the heart which draws loving and admiring friends. As for Martin, the

simple, unpretending manners of this new acquaintance, his warm sympathy and genial humor, proved a sort of fascination to him; and before he had seen him three times he had opened his heart, showing him all its weakness and all its strength. Mr. Bangy took a deep interest in him, and, although poor himself, grasped his hand with a true brotherly grasp, and helped him to place his foot upon another round of the ladder he was striving to climb.

Our author had now made such engagements to write as enabled him barely to support himself and Alice in Mr. Wormlett's house. The literary field he cultivated was below his tastes and ambition; the task of writing and selling short articles was attended with circumstances exceedingly painful and perplexing to a mind so sensitive as his; yet his heart rejoiced in the thought that, with prudence and industry, he was sure of a livelihood in the pursuit he had chosen. The foot-hold he had gained gave him a sense of power and independence. He had a foundation on which to build. Thus, instead of leaping at once to the topmost round of fame and fortune, as, in the warm blood of inexperienced youth, he had hoped to do, he found that, in real life, even genius must be practical, and, commencing at the foot of the ladder, undergo that discipline of climbing which, though often rude and cruel, seems indispensable to the development of the young soul's latent powers.

In this school of experience, Martin learned economy. Not much to the expansion of his soul, perhaps, yet considerably to the advancement of his bodily comforts. He used to tell Alice, with pleasant humor, how he progressed in meanness. One day, by shrewd management, he succeeded in obtaining of Mr. Drove a dollar more for an article than he expected; an instance of financial ability of which he boasted facetiously for a week.

Our hero was guilty of one act of extravagance, however, which candor obliges us to mention. At the instigation of his friend Mr. Leviston, who became his security in the case, he rashly ran into debt for a suit of clothes. It was not without many misgivings that he consented to incur the expense of this outfit. But one powerful consideration decided him. His soul, hungering and thirsting after the love of the sweet Sophronia Dabney, suffered so much chagrin by reason of the seedy apparel in which it was forced to appear before her, that he resolved, at all hazards, to become smart, for her sake. So he said to Leviston, "I 'll do it;" and the thing was done.

And, lo! Martin Merrivale transformed! Witness the anomaly of a poor author in broadcloth and satin, — in shining beaver and polished boots. Yet, with what a careless grace he appears in this new magnificence, for the first time! as if born to laugh at fortune. Poor Alice! she wishes she had eyes to see him now, — she knows he looks so beautiful and grand! The boarders have grown suddenly respectful to the young scribbler. Mr. Wormlett treats him with deference, and omits to collect his weekly board-bill in advance. Miss Dodge, who has always been inclined to regard him with contempt, smiles upon him graciously, and endeavors to draw him into conversation. Miss Tomes, who has long been suspected of partiality for the blind girl's protector, looks upon him now with an eye more fond than ever, and openly betrays her admiration. The Rev. Mr. Mowle and lady, who profess to have no respect for persons, certainly manifest respect for Martin's clothes. They observe his presence, and listen when he speaks, as they were not wont to do when the genius they now recognize was disguised in a shabby coat. Mr. Longstalk congratulates him on his success at authorcraft, and offers him his hand.

As for Mr. Toplink, he is sly and cynical, until it is perceived how the popular current moves; when he moves with it, of course. He openly approves of Merrivale. He is in raptures with his friend Martin. His chum Merry is a great fellow, a prodigious genius, a brick; and he always told you so. Say what you will about Mart Merrivale, he is on intimate terms with him, and is proud of his acquaintance.

And now the shy author, who has long avoided the fair Sophronia, once more worships humbly at her shrine. He makes short calls at the house, and chats with her and her mother in the evening. Often, during the day, you may see him lingering about street-corners, or standing in shop-doors, patiently watching. He walks for hours up and down certain thoroughfares, with perseverance worthy of a better cause. His glances are rapid and eager; his bosom is full of gentlest sighs; and at every gay bonnet, seen in the distance, his heart beateth fast and loud. He neglects his profession, and takes extra pains with his cravat and hair. In short, the susceptible Martin is in love.

Or thinks he is, at least. He experiences violent symptoms of the tender malady. He has beheld the dawn of a light which beautifies the earth; it streams forth from the glowing orient of youthful passion; and his soul leaps up to meet it, like water in a fountain. Amid rainbows and golden mist he moves exultant. The universe is an instrument of music; Love is the master-player; creation throbs and undulates with sweet symphonies, and every breath of air the poet breathes is vibrant with strange, spiritual melody.

For his love is not in vain. Sophronia cherishes a tender secret for his heart alone. With charming coquetry, indeed, she avoids confession; she laughs when his hot passion incarnates itself in speech; she is sceptical to vows; her honeyed lips blaspheme

Love's sacred name. Yet the maiden grace which adorns these affectations betrays Love's radiant face behind the veil, as the presence of the hidden moon is shown in the silver glory on the cloud by which it is concealed. There is tenderness in the gay toss of the young lady's curls. In her merriest mocking glances there is flame. Her raillery is negatived by sighs. There is endearment in the snap of her fingers, and fondness in the frown her dainty brow puts on.

Martin is not always free to visit at the house. Sophronia tells him when to come, and he goeth; when to forbear, and he stayeth away. She has converted her lamp into a signal, and her curtain into a sign. He studies them much by night, pacing to and fro, to and fro, lonely, in the street, with passionate eyes glancing upward ever and anon. Light in the chamber signifieth, variously, certainty, hope, and doubt. With the curtain raised, it is a loadstone inviting him to enter boldly by the hall-door; with the curtain partly raised, it encourages him to wait until the way is clear; with it closed, the sallow radiance shimmering through is telegraphic of suspense. If there is no light, there is no hope; utter darkness is utter despair. Sophronia has company, or is absent, or her father is at home, or — this fear torments her lover — she has grown indifferent and has no wish to see him.

Mr. Dabney is not a domestic man. He maintains an establishment as a convenience, or in obedience to custom. His wife is a useful supplement to himself; his daughter, a necessary evil, incidental to the married state. He eats at home, sleeps at home, and dresses at home; and that is about all. When he meets his family at the table, or sits with them in the evening, his manner is morose and taciturn, and they seem to fear him. Generally, on such occasions, he studies his newspaper, and they converse — if

they converse at all — in whispers. Even the wild Sophronia dreads her father's frown; while her amiable mother looks always sad and anxious in his presence. The Dabneys do not entertain much company. Sophronia feels impatient longings for the whirl and glitter of gay social life; she has tasted Folly's intoxicating cup; she has triumphed in the ball-room, and shone in fashionable parlors; and she is conscious of her power to charm. But Mr. Dabney balks her ambition. He is opposed to parties, and none are ever given in his house. He is suspicious of young men, and inimical to beaux. The expense of dresses subjects the indulgent mother and extravagant daughter to many a frown, and many an angry oath. Not that he is totally deficient in social qualities. He hath his cronies, and his nights are spent in hilarious company. Of such nocturnal joys his wife knows nothing; but oft he fills her chamber with offensive fumes; and "the day after" his spirit is gloomy and fierce, his eyes threaten, and his brows portend thunder; and she can guess into what pit of selfish pleasure he has descended. Once in a while — once in a great while — he brings a friend home with him to dine. At such times he introduces his wife and daughter with cold reluctance, discourages conversation, and keeps a jealous watch over his guest. His companions are not such as he would trust very far out of his sight; they are, indeed, about the last he would choose as associates for Sophronia and her mother; and he speaks of them slightingly behind their back. By them, and by himself, he probably judges all men. He suspects impurity and dishonorable motives in every one; so that Sophronia can never receive her visitors in peace, except when he is gone from home.

Mr. Dabney has met Martin twice, and set him down as a rascal, with the rest of mankind. Hence the secrecy and mystery of

the young man's visits. The restraint to which Sophronia is subjected tends naturally to make her forward, unscrupulous and eager for adventure; and her mother is easily overruled. Mrs. Dabney is not sharp-sighted; she has no suspicion; and, should you tell her that there is a flirtation between Martin and her daughter, it would prove a startling piece of news.

Our hero is troubled with many of those pangs of jealousy and suspense peculiar to lovers. Day and night he is required to exercise patience and self-denial. Sophronia attends places of amusement — not with him. "O dear!" she says, "I suppose I have got to go to the ball to-morrow night. How I wish I could stay at home, and have somebody come and see me, — I don't say who," she adds, archly, as Martin squeezes her little finger; "you need n't think I mean you. Ah!" — what a sigh, what a smile, and what a look she gives him! — "you don't want me to go; do you?"

"Yes," cries Martin, magnanimously; "I would have you go by all means, if it will make you happy."

Thereupon Sophronia flirts her curls and pouts. His indifference pains her. She would have had him declare, with pride and passion, that she should not go — that he would put his shaving implements to an extraordinary and tragical use, if she thought of such a thing. He need not tell her again that he loves her; she will not believe him any more. Then ensues coaxing and a kiss; the young lady is pacified; and now Martin's spirit is troubled. He says he feels convinced that they should part. He is a poor fool, — a lonely, loveless and unhappy mortal, — and how she could ever think she cared for him he cannot conceive. He is without means, without friends, without position; his shadow darkens her bright path; she would be happier without

him, and it is presumptuous in him to walk by her side. No; let her go where pleasure leads her, and he will pursue his gloomy road alone. He is in earnest — or thinks he is, and appears so. at least; and Sophronia bursts into tears. He is cruel, but she does not blame him. She is the most wretched creature living, she is sure. On one thing she is resolved. She will never go to another ball or party as long as she lives — unless she goes with him.

"Come, and let us reason together," then says Martin, very softly. "I cannot go with you — that is certain; and I would not have you deprive yourself of any happiness on my account." And so he makes her promise that she will go without him — yea, with another! — and, solely to please him, she consents, reluctant, to the sacrifice. To the ball she therefore goes; and the disconsolate Martin on the evening thereof adds fuel to the consuming flame within him, by walking past the house, and watching to see her as she comes out and gets into the carriage. A pang shoots through him when, in the flood of light that streams from the hall-door, she appears, radiant with happiness, and, O, so lovely in her white attire, with her fair head uncovered, but not unadorned, and trips gayly down the steps, her sacred finger-tips surrendered to the profane pressure of her gallant's hand. Her light laugh smites his ear with anguish, and he goes away despairing, with rage and grief in his heart.

He is jealous of that favored gallant. Sophronia pretends that she detests him; but he is very amiable, and her parents like him: therefore she endures him. This story is not satisfactory. To Martin the unknown rival is formidable. Fear and uncertainty exaggerate his proportions. Imagination pictures him heroic and aspiring. Thus it always is with persons whom we have never met,

but of whom we have heard our friends speak, as of souls of fortune and consequence. The unseen stranger is an ideal man, invested with such high attributes, that when we go to meet him, it is with feelings of awe and half-dislike. But the touch of hands, or the exchange of compliments, shivers the illusory lens of fancy; we see with our natural eyes; and straightway the half-god sinks to the mere mortal, full of foibles and prejudice, like ourselves.

A phenomenon of this sort occurs when Martin stands for the first time in the presence of his rival. Accident throws them together; the noble youth having called unexpectedly, whilst Sophronia is entertaining Mr. Merrivale in the parlor. She is a little flustered, at first; but, being a girl of tact, she rallies instantly, and gayly introduces Mr. Tiplilly.

Martin's bosom swells with a vague apprehension, and he arises, palpitating, to confront his foe. Resolute, unbending, coldly courteous, he greets him, as conqueror greets conqueror. But what is this? Martin's high blood ebbs and cools. He looks amazed. Where is the royal resistance of soul he expected to meet? Ye gods! how Tiplilly dwindles! The formidable rival shrinks; the ideal man lapses, wanes, and vanishes away!

The actual Tiplilly appears. He is a friendly little fellow, about five feet tall. He is distinguished by a huge cravat-tie, very small legs, encased in very tight pants, and a coat which looks dreadfully new, and seems to pinch him under the arms. He is a good deal inclined to strut; and his motions are mostly of the dancing-school style and finish. Yet his countenance is open and genial, and a sort of puerile amiability overruns his mouth, showing his good-natured teeth.

Mr. Tiplilly is enchanted. He has heard Merrivale spoken of as a young man of great genius, and is delighted to make his

He goes out first, and Martin kisses her lips behind his back. p. 263.

In connection with this favorite theme, he introduces the sub-

acquaintance. The majestic Martin unbends. A softening smile dawns upon the severity of his features. He is no longer jealous of Tiplilly. On the contrary, he regards him with indulgence and friendship; meets his advances half way; and, in the inspiring sense of freedom occasioned by the resolution of his doubts, — in the fulness of benevolence and joy attendant thereupon, — dazzles and fascinates him with his wit and humor. Sophronia never saw him so brilliant, was never so proud of him, and never loved him so ardently before. Having boasted to Tiplilly of her intimacy with the young author, she is gratified with the result of an interview which she had so long taken pains to avoid.

The little gallant desires to cultivate the acquaintance, and makes a formal presentation of his card. Also, when Martin takes his leave, he retires with him, reverently kissing Sophronia's hand at the door. He goes out first, and Martin kisses her lips behind his back, — a liberty which, she declares, Tiplilly never thought of taking in his life. After that, they walk arm-and-arm together up the street, — Tiplilly looking ludicrously little and insignificant by the side of his companion.

Martin wishes to go directly home, for he knows that Alice is sitting up, in hopes of seeing him before going to bed. But he is delicate about showing his new acquaintance where he boards, and to separate himself from him is impossible. Tiplilly has "hooked on," as he terms it, and will not be unhooked. So Martin resolves to "walk him off," — a feat difficult of execution, as he finds. The little fellow struts by his side, and swings his cane, — a slender whalebone, adorned with an exquisitely-carved feminine leg for a handle, — and talks largely about himself, with good-natured egotism.

In connection with this favorite theme, he introduces the sub-

ject of "*Mith Dabney*," — Tiplilly, with his other accomplishments, has a pretty and graceful lisp, — and startles Martin with a piece of intelligence altogether new and unexpected.

"I suppose," he says, with an air of importance, "that, being a friend of the family, you are in the secret."

"What secret do you allude to?" Martin wishes to know.

"O! don't you guess?" lisps Tiplilly, with a chuckle. "Our engagement, of course."

"Your engagement! — ah — yes — certainly," says Martin, aghast. "Then it *is* an engagement, eh? I was n't sure."

"Was n't ye? That 's a good joke! O, yes; it 's all settled. We should have been married this Christmas, but Sophronia's friends think she is too young."

Tiplilly — the innocent, friendly, pompous little Tiplilly — has smitten the strong Martin as with a thunderbolt. But, all unconscious of what he has done, he goes on to relate, in the most ingenuous manner, the whole romantic story of his love: how his "cousin Theodore from Philadelphia," a friend of Mr. Dabney, introduced him; how the very name of Sophronia — Tiplilly says "Thofrony" — charmed him; how her eyes, and hair, and melodious speech, charmed him infinitely more; and how she looked encouragingly upon his passion.

"The way she used to glance out of the corner of her eyes!" he exclaims, with enthusiasm; "you can't conceive of it!"

Martin can, though; for she has looked at him in the same manner, with unmistakable meaning, hundreds of times.

"Then she had a way of shaking her curls over her face and giving a sigh, — that 's what killed me."

Martin recognizes the appalling picture. It is what killed him, too; and it kills him again now in a different way.

"Then she would squeeze my hand — somehow so, just as if she did n't mean to, but could n't help it."

Tiplilly demonstrates the manner of the squeeze on his companion's fingers, reproducing the copy with such fidelity to the original, that it is impossible for the stricken Martin to doubt a single item of his experience.

"Still, I was n't certain; but Cousin Theodore from Philadelphia said I need n't be at all anxious," — *ankthiouth* is Tiplilly's word, — "he knew the family, and would guarantee success," — pronounced *thucktheth*. "Now, what made me doubt, in the first place, was the discovery that Miss Dabney was waited upon before she saw me. In fact, I believe she was engaged, — clandestinely, of course; for her beau was a fellow of no position, — a dry-goods clerk, I think. Well, Cousin Theodore from Philadelphia had talked it over with Mr. Dabney, and I had him on my side; for he thought, if Sophronia was going to be married at all, she might as well have a man of respectability and means — like mythelf!" says Tiplilly, with pleasing pomposity. "Come," he adds, as they are passing a hotel, "let 's go in and have a smoke, and I 'll tell you the whole story."

But Martin has heard enough. He says, with a ghastly smile, that he does not smoke; Mr. Tiplilly must excuse him; he is in haste, and will bid him good-night. He no longer thinks of going home to Alice. His infuriate passion, smothered in his breast, and ready to burst forth, impels him to rush at once into Sophronia's presence, overwhelm her with the terrible charge of her perfidy, and bid her farewell forever.

But Tiplilly has hooked on, as said before, and will not be unhooked. He is in no hurry; he will go Martin's way, for the sake of his company; and he adds that he would enjoy walking

with him all night. "I 'm bound to see you home, anyway," he declares, with chivalric devotion; and see him home he does, accordingly. At the door Martin shakes him off; waits for him to get out of sight; then sets out on his mad errand, and arrives, in a heat and tremor of excitement, at Mr. Dabney's house. There he finds all so dark and still that he dares not ring, thinking Sophronia has retired. Long time he walks up and down in wretched state, contemplating revenge. As he passes the street-lamp, you can see that his features are dark, contracted and fierce, in their expression. But at length he pauses. He looks up. It is a clear December night, and the heavens are all aglow with lustrous stars. How calm and cool, how peaceful, how serene! His heart aches with gazing, and he wrings his hands. "O, what am I!" he articulates through his closed teeth. "An insect pierced with pain; a worm convulsed and writhing! nothing more. O, time! O, life! O, God! Why am I here?" But the stars keep the secret. His struggling soul falls back, self-tortured, on itself. The far-off pharos of heavenly peace, of which his soul, tempest-tossed, beholds an instantaneous misty gleam, goes out in the night and storm; and waves of death and darkness surge around him.

Martin sees Sophronia once more — for the last time, as he has sworn. He meets her smilingly — for he has torn his passion from his heart, and trampled it and crushed it like a weed beneath his feet. He meets her smilingly, — but there is terror and vengeance in his smile,— and leads her unconscious feet upon the hidden mine. He laughs a satanic laugh, as he lights the match and slowly, grimly touches the fusee. She is watching and wondering when the explosion takes place; there is a sudden rocking of the earth; and up she goes ten thousand feet, in the dizzy atmosphere

of amazement and alarm, — blown sky-high with the powder of Tiplilly's confidential disclosures.

But Sophronia alights, like a cat, on her feet, and right side up with care. How it comes about poor Martin cannot tell; but, five minutes after smiting her with the buffet of his wrath, and bidding her farewell forever, he is holding her in his arms, and trying to kiss her through her curls. When they part, the quarrel is all "made up," and there has been a league entered into, offensive and defensive, against Tiplilly.

Yet Martin commiserates that unfortunate youth, and treats him very kindly when he comes to see him afterwards, with a view, as he — Tiplilly — says, of cultivating the "acquaintanth." Sophronia seems also to commiserate him, and to treat him kindly too; for he declares to Martin that his love affair "progretheth thwimmingly."

This news is not so sweet. It fires Martin's indignation, and he reproaches Sophronia. He vows it is a shame that Tiplilly should be so deceived.

"How can I tell him?" she asks, in her distress. "It will break his heart. Besides, I shall have all his friends, and father and mother, and everybody down on me. It is the hardest thing I ever had to do."

"Good!" cries Martin, exultant. "I am glad of it. If you will not come to my arms through fire and water, you are not worthy of my love."

"And you would have me do this — give myself such pain — for you?"

"No, never, Sophronia! — and hear me now: if you leave him for me, I will not accept you. My love will not be bought by any such small sacrifice. I scorn to be compared and chosen. If

you compare and choose, I shall scorn you. No!" cries Martin, glowing, vehement, impassioned, — "do a right thing for the sake of the right. Be true for truth's sake. Make the sacrifice to duty, and the act will be lovely. Then my arms will fly open to receive you!"

Alas! Sophronia cannot comprehend such sentiments. But the grace, and power, and nobility of aspect, with which her lover enunciates them, — so much she understands and admires. Also his determination to see her no more as long as she keeps up the petty sham of attachment with Tiplilly — she understands that. Hence the melancholy demeanor of that young gentleman, when, three days after, he calls on his new friend. He enters the chamber, sits down dejectedly, heaves a sigh, lays his little hand upon his little heart, and motions with his cane, with mournful significance, to blind Alice. Alice is already going; and now the rivals are left alone.

"I have a fearful secret to communicate," says Tiplilly. "Would you object to having the door locked?"

Martin turns the key. Thereupon Tiplilly unbosoms himself; he weeps; he cries out for sympathy and counsel in his hour of tribulation; and Martin is the only friend he knows who has influence with "Mith Dabney."

"Tell her — tell her," says Tiplilly, smothering with emotion, "that she will never find another to love her so well; and that, if she persists," — lisping, — "she may be answerable for a suicide. Tell her that."

And Tiplilly presses the carved lady's foot of his cane-handle to his quivering lips, while his eyes fill with tears. Martin replies with argument and philosophy. Love has wings; he is a god; he cannot be chained and driven, and taught petty tricks, like a

monkey, or a learned pig. His attractions are mysterious; his movements are free as the winds. When he comes, welcome him with jubilee and thanksgiving; for he is a gift of heaven. But when he turns to go, throw open wide the gate, — yea, saddle a horse for his journey, and bid him good speed. To do less — to attempt to detain him, to wail and beat your breast — is selfish and base. Noble souls do not so.

But fine philosophy could never convince or console a despairing lover. Only one thing will satisfy the wretched Tiplilly. Martin must go to Sophronia and plead his cause; and, to do a friendly act, — not at all to enjoy a pleasant evening himself, we may suppose, — Martin consents to be his ambassador.

And now, when evening comes, the anxious Tiplilly awaits in the street while his generous friend performs the arduous mission he has undertaken. Ah, Tiplilly! couldst thou but see the terrible humor of this joke! Whilst thou, this wintry night, hast only thy thin kids — excepting always the cold mitten Sophronia has bestowed upon thee — to keep thy fingers warm, thy faithful and devoted friend, ensconced in the comfortable parlor by the side of the false-hearted, entwines *his* fingers — his fond and playful fingers — with her beautiful curls. And, whilst thy lips grow numb and blue with cold, canst thou not guess by what simple and natural process fire is kindled in his?

Tiplilly guesses too much. The hours, the ages, he waits and watches there, are crowded thick with horrible suspicions. His thoughts are of treachery and revenge — of duels and death. Cousin Theodore from Philadelphia, who is expected in town to-morrow, shall be his second. Ah! if Tiplilly had but courage and skill in shooting men! He is conscious of possessing neither; and the exciting spectacle of Merrivale shot down at ten paces,

and Sophronia frantic, remains a vision of his heated and belligerent brain — nothing more.

When, after the lapse of those ages of suspense, he sees Martin come forth, he joins him and walks by his side, silent and sullen.

"I have done my best for you," says Martin, with an effort, cheeringly.

"Was you doing your best for me," lisps the aggrieved Tiplilly, choked with passion, "when you — when you — when you kithed her?"

"Kissed her? what do you mean?"

"You did, I saw you! when you first went in — the curtain was up, and I stood on the steps of the house opposite. You kissed her, and hugged her too!"

It is a difficult task for Martin to convince the injured Tiplilly that even in the kissing business he was acting the part of a single-hearted ambassador, but somehow he does it with soft and genial humor, mingled with true pathos: and, notwithstanding his ill success with Sophronia, Tiplilly believes in him, and trusts that he may yet, through his powerful instrumentality, reach her heart. He cultivates his friendship more than ever now; introduces him to his cousin Theodore, from Philadelphia; and would — but that Martin declines to accept the obligation — procure him invitations to some of the choicest parties of the season.

This cousin Theodore, from Philadelphia, is a remarkable man Most women would call him handsome, with his glossy moustache, fine complexion, pleasant black eye and Roman nose. He is a person of keen perceptions, self-possession and polish. The secret of his connection with Tiplilly may lie in the relationship, — possibly in the fact that Tiplilly lends him money. As for the young gentleman himself, his admiration for this spirited cousin

knows no bounds. Martin also is drawn to him, but with different feelings.

"Merrivale — the name is familiar to me," says the gay Milburn; and he shakes Martin's hand cordially, while Martin's heart beats quick with interest. "The Merrivales of Summer Hill," adds the gentlemanly Milburn, — "are you a relative of theirs?"

"I have heard of them," says Martin, "and I believe I am distantly connected with the family."

"You certainly are," cries Theodore, heartily. "I discover a striking family resemblance between you and Colonel Merrivale. Did you never meet him? He must know something of you."

"I have seen him," replies Martin, with a flushed face; "but he has probably forgotten me. And," he continues, with an attempt to conceal his excited feelings under a careless exterior, "you need not, if you please, take pains to remind him that so insignificant a branch of his family still exists."

Yet so deep is Martin's interest in all that appertains to his uncle, that he is irresistibly attracted to the man whose feet have ascended and descended Summer Hill. He would know something of his cousins, of his aunt; he would know the history of those high and fortunate souls; and Theodore drops now and then a word or two on the subject, which he treasures up like gems of priceless value.

Another circumstance causes him to remember Mr. Milburn, and regard him with no ordinary interest. Passing down the street, one day, in company with Leviston, he sees his friend Tiplilly coming out of a music-store, sucking the ivory foot of his cane-handle, with a dejected air.

"Ha!" cries that young gentleman, with a sudden start, as if

he had not seen his friend until that moment, nor thought of putting on a melancholy look to be reported to Miss Dabney, — "How are you, Merrivale? I am better, you see. I am getting quite lively, you see. I am, you see, decidedly in good case," — smiling solemnly, and heaving a deep sigh.

Martin turns to introduce his companion. But what dark overshadowing is this the face of Leviston betrays? There is fire in his eyes; and his eyes are fixed on Theodore Milburn, who is coming out of the music-shop after his cousin; and his hands are closed, as with passion.

"Mr. Milburn," says Martin, "this is my friend Mr. Leviston."

Milburn nods with an air of haughty unconcern, and moves away, drawing Tiplilly after him. But Leviston neither speaks nor moves. He stands with his fiery eyes fixed as before, and his angry hands closed.

"What is the matter?" asks Martin, taking his arm, in a kindly manner, as Milburn and his companion mingle with the crowd that throngs the street.

"It is the first time I have seen him," says Leviston, huskily, — "though I have heard of his being in Boston a good deal, of late. I had thought that if I ever met him I should kill him!"

XIX.

THE SHADOW.

F the real life of Alice, all this time, but little can be told. She was so patient, so quiet, so still, that those who were with her most knew almost nothing of what was passing in her mind. A veil seemed to be dropped not only over her vision, but also to muffle and enfold her other senses from contact with the outward world. To those who watched her with interest — to Martin, Leviston and Miss Tomes — she appeared to be walking in a dream.

But, while the blind orphan seemed to others only to dream, she lived perhaps the most real life of them all. During the hours when she sat speechless and motionless by Martin's side, while he wrote, — with her soft blue eyes closed, and with a sweet spiritual light in her sad, half-smiling face, — the inner world was open to her sight, and she saw forms and pictures of deep significance, which even the proud intellect of her companion might have failed to comprehend.

Alice grew more and more a dreamer, day by day. The shadows we call things, which her mortal eyes beheld not, became, as it were, transparent to her subtle sense. She felt that all this goodly world was fluent and transitory; that there was no fixity, no solidity, anywhere; and that soul was the only substance, the only reality. In that poor boarding-house she lived a pure and exalted life. Her chamber was transmuted into a paradise of heavenly fruits and flowers. Her thoughts assumed celestial shapes, and conversed with her, appearing so bright and clear, that often she believed herself standing in the company of angels. Sometimes, when Martin spoke to her, she did not seem to hear his words; but the spirit of his thoughts she saw as pictures, exceedingly brilliant and beautiful.

The young man's passion for Sophronia Dabney was a circumstance which had much to do with developing this faculty of inner sight in Alice. Her thoughts were driven interiorly by his neglect. From the pain his estrangement caused her she turned to the healing streams which flowed melodiously through the happy valleys of the unseen world. There was a barrier between them now. They could not meet as they had met. In vain did the affectionate child endeavor to approach him; in vain did he open his arms and his heart; there was a strange power somewhere, which irresistibly repelled her spirit from his, ofttimes shooting her through and through with pains.

This singular conduct gave Martin no little uneasiness. But one day, after much puzzling of his brains, he exclaimed, with a sudden start, "The poor child is jealous!"

Having made this sage discovery, he endeavored to atone for his past neglect by the tenderest attentions, and ceased to tell her about his adored Sophronia. But his efforts to pacify and soothe

her were of no avail. Sometimes, when he did not see Miss Dabney for several days, the child would be able to get quite near him, and she would say, "You are yourself now, and I love you, O, so much!" Then suddenly the strange repulsion would drive her from him. She would writhe in his arms, and tear herself from him, and throw herself weeping upon the floor.

"What is the matter, my poor child?" Martin would ask, lifting her up in the gentlest manner. "Do you hate me again?"

"I do not hate you. I want to be near you, — I want to love you. But you are not my brother Martin to-night. You are some one else."

By what subtle powers of perception she was thus enabled to divine where he had been, and with whom, Martin could not guess. But so it always was. If he but met Sophronia in the street, and pressed her hand, the sensitive Alice knew it the moment he entered the room where she was, although he opened not his mouth to speak.

"You do not like to have me see Miss Dabney, do you?" he said to her, one day.

She made no answer, but her pure brow darkened with the shadow of that name, and she began to shiver.

"Tell me — tell me truly, now," pleaded Martin, in loving tones; "for I wish to know all about it."

"No, no! I can't tell you. Don't ask me!" exclaimed Alice, nervously. "Don't mind me at all."

Martin insisted, kindly but firmly, and at length she told him all. When he came from seeing Miss Dabney, he brought with him an influence from her; the blind girl could not explain what it was; she only knew that she felt it, and that it gave her pain

It was so strong, even, she imagined, as to affect the spirit of his sketches. It seemed to her that he never wrote so truthfully and sweetly when under that influence as at other times; and Alice was a wonderful little critic. Yet she was nothing, she declared, weeping, after the confession. She did not mean to tell him all this, and he must not remember a word that she had said. It was wrong for her to feel so about Miss Dabney; but she hoped he would forgive her for what she could not help.

"I only want you to be happy, my dear, dear brother!" she exclaimed, with earnest affection. "O, I would wish to die to-night, if I stood in the way of your happiness. So never think of me, — you won't, will you? Only let me be your little sister, and love you, — that is all I want."

One evening, about this time, Mr. Toplink burst into the room with a shout, while the young man was sitting with Alice in the twilight, before the glowing grate. His shrill voice made the child shudder, and Martin looked up with an expression of irritation which Mr. Toplink was too good-natured to perceive.

"What 'll you give?" he cried, brandishing something in the air above Martin's head. "What do you say, Merry? Do you want a letter enough to pay the enormous sum of two cents for it?"

"A letter? You 've no letter for me, have you?"

"It an't for anybody else. Postage prepaid; but it was advertised, and it cost me two cents to get it out of the office."

Martin fumbled in his pocket, and produced the stipulated sum; then Alice held the letter, while he lighted a lamp.

"When I look over the advertised list," said the animated Toplink, "I always look for all the names I know. There 's Tomes, and Longstalk, and old Dodge, and Winksworth, and

Flinks, and a dozen others, I always look for regularly, and bring up their letters, when there is any. Mowle — I look for him, too; but, mind ye, I don't bring him any more letters. I brought him one last summer, — paid for it, you know, — and, don't ye believe, I han't got that postage out of him to this day. Well, I come up with him afterwards — rather. I saw a letter advertised for Rev. Abraham Mowle, — but I did n't say anything, — I kept it to myself, and laughed in my sleeve over it, till Saturday night; when says I, 'By the way, Mr. Mowle,' says I, 'there 's a letter advertised for you; but, as I did n't happen to have any cents in my pocket, I could n't take it from the office.' Then off he started in his odd way, making the biggest fuss in the world, — the old woman, in her old-fashioned cap, went to the door to see him off, and charged him not to overdo himself, and *my-deared* him a dozen times before he was out of hearing; and you 'd better believe I laid off and laughed! The fun of it was, he found the post-office shut up, just as I knew it would be by the time he got there. Of course he come back without the letter, all exhausted, and his voice all gone, so that he could only just groan. You should have seen his wife fawn over him, and fan him with her handkerchief! Well, he worried about that letter till Monday, — he was too pious to have it taken out Sunday morning, — and kept saying to his wife, 'My dear, I can't think who that letter is from; can you guess, my dear? I should n't wonder if it was from so and so, should you?' He was afraid somebody was dead; or there was money in the letter, and somebody would take it from the office and rob him; or there was a medical prescription in it, which he should have had last week, — as if his life was sacrificed by the delay! Well, sir, there was a jolly time about that letter, which, after all," cried Toplink, chuckling excessively,

"turned out to be nothing but a doctor's bill from somewhere up country. You never saw a man so mad in all your life!"

While Mr. Toplink was talking, Martin, impatient to get at the contents of the letter, broke the seal. To his surprise, he found the missive written in a graceful feminine hand; and, still more to his surprise, — to say nothing of his agitation and alarm, — he learned from it that his uncle, Colonel Merrivale, of Summer Hill, lay at the point of death, — that he had a matter of importance to communicate to him alone, and desired to see him before it was too late.

Martin crushed the letter together in his hands, and, eagerly snatching up his hat, made some unintelligible inquiry concerning the time when the cars started.

"You an't going off so, I hope," cried the good-humored Toplink, enjoying the excitement of the scene with keen relish.

"There 's not a moment to lose. My future depends upon it, — I must see my uncle before he dies."

"But who knows that he han't been dead a week already? The letter has laid in the post-office four or five days, at any rate. Let 's look at the mail-mark. January — twenty something; it looks like twenty-seven. We are into February now, you know."

"And my uncle may have died, and the secret with him! But it is possible — he may have lingered along till now. There is all the more need of haste."

"But you 'll find that there is no train out till morning," observed the delighted Toplink.

After this stunning announcement, Martin cooled down a little, collected his scattered senses, and set himself about preparing for the journey in a rather more practical manner than he had at first thought of doing. He also had time to bestow some attention

upon Alice, who was much distressed, and whom he had quite forgotten in his excitement.

"How long will you be away?" asked the child, timidly, after Mr. Toplink had gone down to supper.

"Probably not long," replied Martin, "Not more than a couple of days, at the furthest."

"I wish I could think it would be so!" exclaimed Alice, weeping almost wildly. "But something tells me that you are to be separated from me. I am going to lose you! O, don't let it be so, will you?"

He pledged his life that he would never desert her, let what would occur.

"O, you are so good! I do believe you will not, my dear brother! But there is a Shadow — it stands between you and me, and its face is very stern, and it puts a hand upon your breast and one upon mine, and holds us from each other. Is it something that is going to separate us? Tell me again that it shall not be so!"

Martin reassured her, and took her in his arms. Long time he talked to her with comforting words; and gradually she grew calm, and nearer and nearer still she nestled to his bosom, and closer still her arms embraced his neck.

"I see it again," she said, softly, after a long silence.

"What do you see again, — the Shadow?"

"No — the cross. You bear it bravely now! But there comes on a storm, — it grows dark; the tempest beats your face, and there are rocks and chasms to pass, and the mountain looks black before you, in the night."

"Is that all the picture?"

"There is more, but a veil hides it from my sight. How

strange these visions are! What is this cross I see so many times?"

"You who see it, and know so much about it," said Martin, "should be able to tell what it is."

Alice made no reply; but for some minutes she was very still; she scarcely breathed. At length her right arm, which encircled Martin's neck, began to move, and her intelligent hand stole softly between his collar and his throat, and crept around towards his left shoulder, gliding along upon his smooth flesh. She seemed quite unconscious what she was doing; but her companion started, and shuddered, and held his breath with suspense. Then, when her hand had ceased to move, and her delicate finger touched a spot low down on his neck, his heart beat with heavy and painful throbs, and cold sweat-drops glistened on his brow.

"What is it?" he asked, in a quick, agitated tone of voice.

She gently pressed the spot, ceased weeping, and murmured, "O, my brother! O, my dear, dear brother!" as if from very sympathy her heart were breaking. Then tenderly he withdrew her hand, and looked down upon her sweet, sorrowful face with an expression of intense pain and yearning.

"Why do you weep?" he asked.

"Did I put my hand on your neck just now? Forgive me," said Alice; "I did not know what I was doing. I thought I was on the mountain with you. I touched the cross, but I could not lift it, for it seemed a part of you."

The conversation was abruptly terminated at this point by the arrival of Leviston and Toplink. Alice dried her tears; and Martin, agitated by what had taken place, waited impatiently for the departure of his friends, in order to see what more she would have to say. When he was once more alone with the child, how-

ever, she had quite forgotten the cross, and neither thought nor vision came to her mind concerning it.

"I am going out a little while now, Alice," he said, after sitting some minutes by her side. "You had better go to bed soon, and try to sleep."

"I will, dear brother," cheerfully replied the child. "I know where you are going, but I shall not be so naughty to-night as I have been sometimes. I will go to bed as soon as you are gone. You will be sure and let me see you in the morning, won't you?"

"See me, my poor child?" said Martin, sadly, as he held her in his arms. The expression, which was one she often made use of, struck him with peculiar force at that time; and the thought it suggested, that she had never seen him yet, and could never see him with her natural eyes, caused his sympathies to gush forth; and, with a fresh resolve, warmed and vitalized by the love he bore her, he vowed inwardly to provide for her and protect her with his life.

Alice went to bed, as she had promised to do, when he was gone. But no soft slumber came to soothe her troubled soul. She was awake when Miss Tomes entered the chamber, stepping lightly to avoid disturbing her. She heard Martin return home from visiting the fair Sophronia, an hour later. She knew when the boozy Winksworth, groping his way up stairs at one o'clock, went plunging into Mr. Mowle's room, mistaking it for his own. Still she could not sleep. She was haunted by the Shadow she had seen standing, like Fate, between her and Martin. It lay down by her side, and put its cheek to hers, and kissed her with its cold and ghostly lips.

On the following day the Shadow was with her still. It rose up

with her at dawn; it moved beside her when she left the chamber; she felt its embrace when Martin bade her cheerfully "good-by," and departed on his journey. It remained with her when he was gone, and its paralyzing presence would not let her weep.

It was with her when Mr. Leviston and the good Miss Tomes spoke comforting words to cheer her; it stood between her and them. It was with her when Mrs. Wormlett, in one of her cross moods, scolded her for moping. It was with her when she sat listening to the shouting and moaning of the gale, to the beating and sifting of the snows against the window-panes, — for it was a stormy day. It was with her when the fire-bells rang out their alarm, faintly heard above the roar and clatter of the storm. It was with her, chill and grim, as she sat thinking of Martin far away, and trembling for his safety.

It was with her when, in her mind's eye, she saw her poor lost father struggling in the windy streets. It stood before her, and waved its boding hands above her head, as she beheld him hurrying on, breasting the tempest and the sharp volleys of snow. It grew darker and darker as he approached her from afar, with outstretched arms; darker still, — but it was like a dream, — when he reached the very house in which she was, and demanded his child; still darker, and still more deathly dark, — it was like a frightful dream, — when he came tottering through the hall, and up the stairs, and into the chamber, and clasped her in his weak and shaking arms.

"O, my father!" she cried out, in anguish, starting from that dream, "is it you — is it you? My father! — my dearest, dearest father!"

"My child! — my Alice!" faltered the broken voice of Caleb Thorne.

Mrs. Wormlett, who, with much opposition and many high words, had admitted the haggard stranger and followed him to the chamber, stepped back and watched him, suspiciously, from without the door.

"It *is* you, father! — it is indeed you!" burst forth the blind girl once again; and, weeping, and sobbing, and clinging to his neck, she buried her face in his tattered, snowy clothes, and lay there, convulsed and speechless, until the stricken father feared that the shock had killed her.

"Speak to me, Alice! speak to me!" pleaded the wretched man. "O, God! what have I done! You must not die, — do not let me murder you, my child."

"O, no, no, my dear father!" articulated Alice. "I am so glad — so glad!"

"Glad — after all that has passed?" said Caleb, with remorseful passion. "But you do not know what a fiend I have been! You would hate your father, Alice, if you did."

"O, no, no, no!" again burst forth the child. "I am so glad, — I love you so, dear father!"

"Love me — love a brute like me!" said Caleb, in a hollow voice, shaking as with a palsy. "But you do not know all." He pressed her to his heart and wept aloud. "I am not worthy to touch you, my pure and blessed darling. But forgive me. I will atone for all the past. I am well now; I am strong; I will live and labor for you. Come!"

He arose, tottering to his feet, and endeavored to lift her in his arms.

"What do you mean?" she cried, in piteous accents. "Where will we go? Why do you take me away?"

"This is no place for you," replied Caleb, huskily. "They

wish to keep you from me, and make you hate me. Come away!"

"No, no, dear father! they have been good to me — they have let me love you, — O, father! do not take me away!"

"They have deceived your tender heart, my Alice. They are wolves that would devour you, my poor lamb! Come, we must not stay."

"But the storm!" said Alice, in her despair — "how it howls and beats! You will not let me perish in the storm!"

"I will bear you in my arms. I will keep you from the cold," replied the shattered man. "Do not fear."

"It is cruel, — it is cruel, dear father, — for you do not understand! My brother Martin, — he has been so good and kind to me, — you don't know! You will not take me from him!" pleaded the distressed child. "You will let me be with him, won't you?"

"Yes, yes," said Caleb, hastily. "We will send for him to come and see us in our new home."

"But we have no home now, have we? O, let us stay here! I am afraid to go, dear father! Let me stay."

"You tear my heart, when you talk so, Alice. I see you dread me, and love me no more. You dislike and fear me."

"I love you, — I do not dread, or dislike, or fear you!" cried the child, with vehemence, embracing the broken man. "But my brother Martin — I cannot think of leaving him. Are you sure I shall be with him again some time?"

Caleb's brow became contracted and dark at the sound of Martin's name. But, to pacify his child, he promised her what she asked. Then, with tears and trembling, she groped her way to the closet to find her outer garments, and quietly put them on.

"Where did you get this?" asked the jealous father, clutching her shawl.

"Mr. Leviston gave it to me. O, don't take it away! let me wear it, father; it is so cold, and the storm beats so!"

"Well, well," muttered Caleb, desisting. "But make haste."

"And Mr. Leviston — I shall meet him again, too, shall I not? He has been so kind to me! Dear father, can't we wait until he comes?"

"This is a new hood, — where did you get it, Alice?"

"Miss Tomes made it for me, — the good Miss Tomes. O dear! I wish you would let me wait until she comes. She has been so kind to me, all along! Dear father, can't we wait?"

"Are you ready?" said Caleb Thorne, quickly. "Come, my child. There, there! don't cry. I am afraid you are not happy at meeting your father again."

"I am happy. We will go now," murmured Alice, trying to dry her tears.

Caleb Thorne made no reply, but hastened down the stairs, leading his child. His manner was fearful; and Mrs. Wormlett, still suspicious, and not a little alarmed, followed him, with words of sharp remonstrance, to the door. But he gave her a fierce and jealous look, drawing the child closely to him, with his protecting arm around her form; and, satisfied that he had stolen nothing, she suffered him to depart. Then out into the storm went Alice, with the Shadow by her side, holding her hand; for the Shadow and her father seemed one; and the angry tempest smote her face and tossed her shawl away, and blew her curls out wildly, and flung back her hood; and the snows spun round and round her in

swift eddies, and stung her tender cheek, and sifted into her neck and bosom, and filled her little shoes.

"We cannot go, father!" She gasped for breath, and strove in vain to speak loud enough for him to hear. "The storm — it strangles me, father."

He heard her not; but, wrapping the shawl around her once again, shielded and sustained her with his arm, and staggered forth to struggle with the tempest, in the night.

Ah, what a night! Through every street and alley swept the storm. Into poor tenements it burst, sifting its snows and blowing its chill breath through every crack and crevice. It swooped down upon the easy coal-merchant, going from his rich-freighted wharf to his comfortable home, consoling himself for the keen lashes and rude buffets, that hit him in the face, with pleasant contemplations of the high price of fuel. It almost blew away the poor shop-girl, exposed in the uproarious streets. It smote alike the saint and the sinner, the wealthy stock-holder and the shivering wretch in poverty's patches and rags.

It followed with its fury the half-crazed father, flying with his child. It whirled around them, and trampled over them, and sprang up fierce and strong before them, and piled the obstructing drifts about their feet.

"Father! father!" moaned Alice, in a lull of the tempest. "I shall die! I cannot walk. I can hardly breathe. The snow shoots into my face like needles. Let us go back, and wait; O, do, father, do!"

Caleb Thorne, alarmed and anxious, glanced up at the darkened sky, and looked forward into the misty gloom. There was a deep trouble in his haggard face. The fire in his hollow eyes flickered as with doubt.

"A little further, my child!" he cried, summoning all his energies once more. "I know the way. We shall be at rest very soon. Cover your face with my coat, and cling to me with all your might."

At that moment, a whirlwind traversed the streets. It descended with clamor and gloom, on tempestuous wings. Caleb Thorne and Alice were enveloped in the cloud of whirling and rushing snow. Their cries were muffled as with the mantle of death. The father's arm became too weak for his child's support; she sank down, smothering, in the drift; and the storm swept over her.

The shock threw Caleb upon his knee. But he was up again in a moment; affrighted and bewildered, he looked around him for his child, who lay half-buried in the waves of snow at his side.

"Never mind, my Alice!" he cried. "One more trial, darling! There is an oyster-house close by. We will go in and rest, and brush the snow from our clothes; we will warm ourselves, and eat something, and prepare for a fresh start. Come, my poor child."

"I cannot, father. But don't mind me," gasped Alice. "Go and let me perish. It will not be much matter, dear father. Leave me — leave me here."

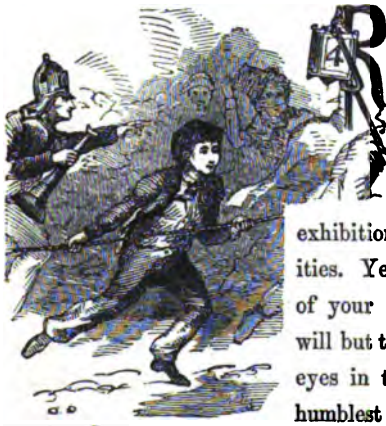
Caleb Thorne gave utterance to some hoarse words which were lost in the rush of the gale, and, lifting Alice in his arms, bore her swiftly through the street. He reached the oyster-house; he touched the latch; the storm hurled the door open before him; and, falling forward, he sank with his unconscious burden on the floor.

Then once more, in a sort of trance, the blind girl saw the

Shadow. It stood over her, and chafed her temples, and warmed her hands, and brushed the snow from her tangled hair; it wore her father's form, it had her father's look; but it was the same relentless Shadow still, standing between her and Martin.

XX.

THE PROGRESS OF CHEESY.



ROMANCE is the twin-sister of Reality. The two cannot be separated; they are united by a ligature as fatal as that which gives zest to the exhibition of the Siamese monstrosities. Yet you can see them any day of your life, free of expense, if you will but take the trouble to open your eyes in the street, in proudest or in humblest homes, even in the kitchen where your puddings are baked. The one, a creature ethereal and angelic, whose face is ever upturned in the glory of the ideal life, unattainable in the heavens, and whose castle gleams pendulous in air, amid sweet gardens steeped in purple mist, and leaping fountains of light, and rainbows soft as love, and streams, and groves, and mountains, all of cloud, with only a Jacob's ladder leading thereunto, "walks up and down our earthly slopes," side by side with her dwarfed and limping brother.

We have seen how, in the case of Martin, Reality, plodding and practical, kept pace with his aspiring sister, dragging heavily after, with sad and wearisome footsteps, when she would have flown. Thus it is ever. Romance cannot go far alone. Reality holds her back. Even in affairs of love, when ofttimes her lame brother is quite lost sight of, he keeps close by her side, creeping along the earth as if ashamed, to arise, grim and relentless, towards the close of the honeymoon, if not before. I saw this strange pair yesterday at a funeral, and last night at a wedding. They move continually before my eyes; yet seldom have I seen them well agreed. Instead of working harmoniously together, — the one, whose mission is use, ordering the necessities of life, and the other, whose province is beauty, lending the charm which graces lowliest works, — they seem at most times to be affected by jealousy and impatience. If you pay your addresses too assiduously to the fair sister, the sullen dwarf takes every occasion to trip your heels, and push you into ditches. On the other hand, if you make Reality your god, and scoff at his companion, she turns away her face, sorrowful, and hides the light of those eyes which beautify and sweeten life. Take both by the hand, accepting the mission of each, and slighting neither, and mayhap you shall see the two become one perfect form and spirit of beauty; for the legend runs that Romance is but the soul of Reality, half divorced by the discords of earth, and that, when Love and Truth prevail, she will enter again, with her informing grace, into his ugly and distorted body.

The uncultivated Cheesy, no less than the poet Martin, suffered from these unhappy differences between the dwarf and his sister. Even he, son of a Dabney, and fugitive from his stepmother's roof, followed Romance with too ardent footsteps, and

received many a disastrous check and cruel fall, at the hands of the malignant dwarf; until, at length, he gave up the chase in despair, and sat down, angry and full of woe, to lament for the vanishing Psyche, and to curse her hideous brother.

A place in a store was not quite the paradise Cheesy expected to find it. Hoeing corn, pounding clothes and churning, were nothing compared with the duties he now had to perform. He was the drudge of the establishment, and every hard and particularly disagreeable job fell to his lot. At first it had been nothing but fun for him to open boxes, hoist up bales, and handle heavy goods; it was when Romance smiled upon him over his work, and he sprung up to meet her; but, having bumped his head repeatedly against the dwarf's, which kept popping up before him at every eager step forward, he became disheartened, and, as already said, sat down to lament and curse.

Yet Cheesy would not have minded the hard work so much, had he received anything like Christian treatment in his new situation. Sniffenden, of Sniffenden & Co.'s, although a "stiff and strong old fogy church-member," as the under clerks called him, was a glum, unbending tyrant. Whenever he entered the store, an awful hush fell upon the cheerful clerks, and a deeper gloom seemed to overshadow the walls; business became unusually brisk and silent; and even Mr. Wilcox, the self-possessed head-clerk, appeared to be not altogether at his ease. Also Mr. Tuffinham, the "Co.," — a watchful, obsequious young man, who had been taken into partnership because Mr. Sniffenden wanted some interested person to look after the business during his absence, — stood in awe of him, like the rest.

Yet the senior partner had his jokes; he could now and then unbend and be facetious; on which occasions Messrs. Tuffinham

and Wilcox were invariably susceptible of fun, and capable of perceiving a vast deal more of the article in Sniffenden's hard, forced humor, than any other person, independent of the establishment, could have done. How they rubbed their hands, smiled attention, and doubled up with laughter, when it was expected of them to do thus much in honor of Sniffenden's jokes! At such times a general good feeling prevailed in the house, and every employé, with the exception of poor Cheesy, might venture to listen for the point of the jest, and even to smile when it was supposed to have come off.

The benevolent Sniffenden, as society named him, in consequence of large donations to charitable objects, never kicked, nor struck, nor spoke in savage tones, to the drudge of the house. He scarcely ever looked at him, even. Yet the fearful weight of his tyranny rested directly on Cheesy's shoulders. It was passed down to him through the successive situations above him, from that of Tuffinham and the head-clerk. These powerful individuals took revenge for the despotism to which they were compelled to submit, by oppressing all beneath them generally, and Cheesy in particular. Mr. Dupper, the second, comforted himself in like manner, by treating with arrogance all under him in general, and Cheesy in especial. On the same principle did the third, fourth, fifth and sixth, seek consolation for the superciliousness of their superiors, in domineering over those below them, always selecting Cheesy as an object of peculiar persecution. And of all these tyrants, from Sniffenden and Co. down, the most acrimonious and determined was young Civett, who, having served in Cheesy's capacity before him, and experienced all the hardships of the situation, felt bound to be revenged on his successor for all that he himself had ever suffered.

Cheesy was but little better off at his boarding-house. His greenness and awkwardness subjected him to such intolerable ridicule, that it was no comfort at all for him to go home at night, and he looked forward to breakfast and dinner only with misgivings and sickness of heart. It was enough to spoil his appetite, at any time, to think of the foppish Jenks sitting opposite him, at the head of the table, and making fun of him, in whispers, for the edification of the giggling girls. Every mouthful of food he took, and the manner of taking it, seemed to be observed. Disdainful eyes were on him ever; even Mrs. Quilby, the good-natured and familiar landlady, treated him with contempt; and the boarders, as a body, appeared to consider him an interloper, who had no right to set foot in so respectable an establishment. And the miserable Cheesy himself felt that he was guilty of unpardonable presumption, whenever he showed his lugubrious face and shrinking figure in presence of those smart young gentlemen and gay young ladies.

Much of the incivility of which Cheesy considered himself the object was doubtless imaginary. Generally, we may suppose, his presence at the table was scarcely observed. The whispered conversation of the sleek Jenks and the tittering girls was on topics of far greater importance, probably, than the verdant boarder. When the grinning Cargess passed him the bread, or asked if he should help him to a piece of the veal, Cheesy had no reason to regard his politeness as of the ironical sort. And when Miss Banks inquired why he did not spend his evenings in the parlor, it was unjust to suspect her of sinister motives. Yet, having once been tortured with the conviction that he was a laughing-stock for the company, he could not banish the uncomfortable notion from his mind. Every laugh, every sly look, every allusion to things he

did not comprehend, every act of courtesy of which he was, naturally enough, the object, he interpreted as having a direct bearing upon his personal appearance. Hence he began to form dilatory habits, coming later and later to his meals; until at length he made it a matter of calculation to arrive home at dinner about the time the last boarder was leaving the table. His supper also he generally managed to eat alone. Breakfast was not so easily disposed of; he was obliged to be early at the store, and to wait for the rest was impracticable. He accordingly made friends with the cook, and bribed her to give him his breakfast a quarter of an hour before the regular bell rung, pretending that his business required that despatch.

Cheesy's evenings were no less lonely and wearisome than his days. True, after working hard in the store from seven o'clock in the morning, he was tired enough, when night came, to enjoy his rest. But Cheesy was horribly homesick; he needed sympathy; his heavy sorrows would not let him sleep. Without a friend in the world, without a companion into whose bosom he could pour the story of his wrongs, he was, he firmly believed, the most wretched being in the world; he saw nothing before him worth living for; Romance was dead, and the ugly dwarf, Reality, hugged him close in his churlish embrace. And now he looked back, regretful, upon the peaceful village life he lately led. The remembrance of old faces and kind hearts, whom he had left behind him, haunted him sadly.

What jolly times he used to have at the store where the post-office was kept, and in the bar-room of the village inn! How he used to amuse everybody with his comic songs, and his imitations of circus-riders! Ah, those good old times, those happy, golden days, ere city-life was dreamed of; when he was innocent of run-

ning away; when the height of his ambition was to play glibly on the fiddle and keep a country tavern! There was no sacrifice he would not have made to return, unscathed, to the choice society he had so rashly deserted. There was Cole, the lame shoemaker, who used to tell such dear, old, frightful ghost-stories to the boys who came to his shop and brought him apples and peaches, between sundown and dark; Jacobs, the jockey, renowned for lying, whose daring and outrageous departures from truth had a wonderful fascination for the young; old Mosely, the miller, whose hearty good humor was so popular, that his venerable white hat was honored and beloved through all the country round about; Perkins, the blacksmith, a pious formalist, of whom the boys stood somewhat in awe, although there were times when he enjoyed a story or a horse-trade as well as any one; — these, and a dozen others, farmers and mechanics, frequenters of bar-room and store, — how vividly their images arose in Cheesy's brain, and how he longed once more to join the happy group, of a winter's evening! Then there were the boys, his mates, whose memory was embalmed in sweet associations of grand sports on the village green, — snow-fights and fox-and-geese in winter, and round-ball, two-old-cat, and "old red lion, come out of your den," in summer. And recollections of moonlight nights, when he used to climb out of the window, after his step-mother had gone to bed, and join the band of youthful marauders, whose delight was to scour the country in search of fun, — eating farmer's melons, stealing grapes or peaches, and roasting green corn at midnight fires on the borders of lonely fields, — filled Cheesy's disconsolate soul. His step-mother was remembered with a sort of tenderness, and many a time he wished himself sitting in her kitchen corner, as of old, braiding whiplashes, or reading Robinson Crusoe, or

even at work on the dreaded churn. But this could not be; and his only source of solace was to go to bed early, and lie thinking of these things until, oppressed with an insufferable sense of grief, he cried himself to sleep, like any homesick child.

This life became horribly monotonous, at length. Cheesy did not get so tired during the day as when he first went into Sniffenden and Co.'s store; he consequently enjoyed less the comfort of rest and sleep, and his old love of adventure revived. Avoiding still the boarding-house parlor, where others seemed to find so much pleasure after dark, he began to spend his evenings abroad. After swallowing his hasty supper, he would run out, and pace to and fro, to and fro, lonely, in the street, even like his friend Martin at that time, but from different motives, and with different hopes.

The sweet Sophronia had quite forgotten her country cousin. His aunt, seeing that he was provided with decent clothes and a place, neglected him thenceforward. "They feel above me," the poor boy used to murmur, in the bitterness of his heart. "I should think they might a took me to board, seeing we 're related. They might let me come and see 'em sometimes, anyway. It 's real mean," he would declare to himself, weeping desolately, and whetting his face upon his sleeve. "Uncle Jesse — I 'll come up with him some day; I 'll pay him off — the old ruffian! See 'f I don't!"

About this time, Cheesy began to run regularly with the engines. A fire-alarm was his great delight. He would watch and wait impatiently, standing around corners, on cold December nights, longing to hear the shout and the clamor of bells. He was among the first — often the very first — at his favorite engine-house, when the alarm was given. He mingled with the crowd that ran out the machine, and dragged it with clash and clatter through

the streets. The excitement was glorious. It caused him to forget all his woes. It inspired him with exultation and courage. It came like a flood, lifting him on joyous waves; it annihilated Sniffenden and Co.'s, and drowned Mrs. Quilby's boarding-house in oblivion. But when it subsided, — when the strong tide rushed back with rapid ebb, — Cheesy was left stranded in the mud, like an unhappy clam. He tried in vain to make the acquaintance of the engine-boys; conscious of greenness and inferiority, he lacked that assurance which commands recognition in aristocratic circles. One night he lingered near the door of the engine-house with two swaggering youngsters, whose friendship he endeavored to cultivate. He listened while they talked about their relatives and friends, and boasted of good times at home, with mirth-inspiring allusions to jokes and incidents they had enjoyed together. At length one said,

"Wal, I must put; the gals will be sett'n' up for me; good-night."

"That reminds me," the other replied, "that I han't been to supper. Mother 'll have a corner of the table set for me, though, and you better believe I shall have a good time over that cold beef and fixins, with my feet on the stove! She 'll have some slices of bread all ready to toast, the minute she hears my feet on the door-step. Remember me to Jane Ann."

"Of course. She 'll expect you over to-morrow night."

"And I 'll be *thar*, certain. Good-night."

And they parted: without a word to Cheesy, they parted, and went to their comfortable homes; while he, rendered doubly miserable by the visions of happiness their conversation called up, retired, sighing and sobbing, to his cheerless bed in Mrs. Quilby's house. No sweet Jane Ann expected him to-morrow night; no

kind mother kept a corner of the table for him, with a reserve of toast, to-night.

Once in a great while, the homeless Cheesy saw his old friend Martin, who always had a word of comfort and encouragement for the heart-sick boy, whatever might be his own griefs at the time. Aside from him, the luckless youngster had no friend. With one exception. Old Grayle, the book-keeper in Sniffenden & Co.'s, certainly deserved that distinction. He was so different from the overbearing Wilcox and the rest; he was so quiet and humble, so patient under the insults young Civett delighted to put upon him; there was so much kindness in the subdued smile with which he always bade Cheesy good-morning, that the boy learned early to look to him for sympathy and friendship. It did him good to pass by old Grayle's desk and receive that smile of recognition, any time during the day. It was a satisfaction to be patted kindly on the shoulder by that gentle hand of his, when the clerks dispersed at night, and Cheesy was left to assist in shutting up. What a tumult of emotion was awakened in his heart when the book-keeper, observing the grief of his countenance, one evening, spoke to him with glistening eyes, and in a voice tremulous with feeling! —

"Keep up courage, my lad! There's a good time coming. You are young yet, thank Heaven! When you are as old as I am, you 'll have plenty of time to think of sorrow."

Cheesy's eyes overflowed. He could have embraced old Grayle's neck, and wept upon his bosom. He went home comparatively happy that night, thankful that there was one such man in the world, and wishing there were a few more like him.

Perhaps the book-keeper saw how much good a kind word did the poor boy's heart. Or, it may be that he himself wanted sym-

pathy; for the shadow of a deep sorrow rested upon his life. However this might be, he never lost an opportunity now of bestowing a smile or a cheering word upon Cheesy.

"Have you got a pleasant home?" he asked, one evening, as the two left the store together.

"I han't got no home; that is, none wuth mentioning," replied Cheesy. "I board up to Mrs. Quilby's, here, in High-street."

"Where are your friends, my son?"

"Han't got no friends, nuther." Cheesy's voice began to break. "I don't know nobody here in town; that is, nobody 't cares for me."

"Well, well; you must n't be down-hearted," said old Grayle, laying his hand kindly on the boy's back. "That 's just the way I began life in town. I shall never forget how lonesome and homesick I was, at first. But it was all for the best. I could n't sympathize with you, if I had n't been through with it all myself," he added, with touching humor; "that 's one good come from it."

"I 've seen some perty hard times," muttered Cheesy, with a grievous contraction of the muscles of his mouth. "Everything has gone wrong with me sence the day I come to Boston."

"You never told me whether you found your friend from whom you got lost that night, when you ran with the engine."

"Who told you about that?" asked Cheesy, astonished.

"Your memory is n't so good as mine, or you would recollect seeing me at the fire," said old Grayle, with a smile.

"By gracious!" exclaimed Cheesy, "you an't the man, be ye, that asked me what the matter was, and told me to follow the ingine back that I come with?"

"I'm the very man," replied old Grayle, with the same benevolent smile, tempered with sadness.

"I want to know! I do remember ye now. And the fust time I met ye in the store, I wondered where I'd seen ye — 's queer I did n't think!"

"So it appears we are old acquaintances."

"It appears so," chuckled Cheesy.

"And, on the strength of that," added old Grayle, "you must pay me a visit. I live in Pleasant-street. Come in and spend the evening with us, some time, won't you?"

"I should like to fust-rate, but —"

"Supposing we set to-morrow evening, if you have no engagement?"

"*I* han't no engagement," said Cheesy.

"To-morrow evening it is, then," replied old Grayle. "If you 've got time, walk up with me now, and learn the way."

Cheesy had plenty of time, and desired nothing better. He accompanied his friend to the door of his residence, — an old wooden tenement, with the gable on the street, and a side entrance through a little yard, — and, having witnessed a happy meeting between him and two bright children who ran out to the gate to embrace him, returned to his boarding-place, elated with the anticipation of his promised visit.

XXI.

THE GRAYLE FAMILY.

IT was a lucky day for Cheesy when he made the acquaintance of the Grayle family. He was very bashful at first, on entering the house of his friend; but it was not long before he began to feel quite at home there, and it seemed the most natural thing in the world for him to run in of an evening, and play with the children, or listen to the pleasant stories of Uncle Joseph, the carpenter.

Uncle Joseph — commonly called Uncle Joe — was a brother of Mrs. Grayle; a big, rosy-complexioned man, with a vast waistcoat, a liquid, bubbling voice, an inexhaustible fund of humor, and a good deal of amiable self-conceit. His home was near by; and he used to drop in now and then, as he termed it, to cheer up his sister, who was inclined to be down-hearted, and to tell a moral story for the edification of the children. Uncle Joe had been wild in his younger days; but he was now a deacon, and it was his delight to recount his youthful follies, in order that the young

might profit by his experience. Yet it was whispered by the sagacious neighbors that the stout carpenter had other reasons for frequenting his sister's house; hints of a shrewish wife at home were liberally thrown out; and it was well known that pious Uncle Joe loved what he termed "the ways of peace and pleasantness."

The family had one other regular visitor. Every Sabbath evening he used to come in and sit an hour: he had his allotted seat in the corner; he was always expected, and he never failed to make his appearance at the usual time. He was an eccentric mortal; but every one respected his strangeness. Sometimes he would sit out his hour without speaking, and finally depart in silence. Again, he would exchange a few words with old Grayle and his wife, crack a dry joke with Uncle Joe, and talk a little with the children; but this was always done in an absent-minded way, and, as it were, under a cloud. All seemed to understand him, and he was generally beloved, notwithstanding his eccentric humor. Between him and Mr. and Mrs. Grayle there evidently existed a sympathy too deep for idle speech.

"He 's a strange fellow," said Uncle Joe, mysteriously, to Cheesy, as they went out together one evening from the book-keeper's house.

"So he is!" exclaimed Cheesy. "What 's the matter with him, anyway?"

"Hush!" replied the carpenter, in his rich, moist whisper. "I 'll tell ye. That George used to be as decent a young man as you 'd wish to meet. He was a little wild, perhaps, — that was bad!" said Uncle Joe, with a shudder; "but I 've charity to cover that; I was wild myself, in my younger days; I was a chief of sinners," added the broad carpenter, with unction. "I used to drink liquor,— all night, sometimes. I prided myself on

drinking all the young fellows drunk. I could beat the best of 'em playing billiards and rolling nine-pins, them days. Take warnin' by me, and avoid all such dissipation. You never drink, nor play, I 'm sure; you 're too good a boy."

Cheesy was almost ashamed to confess his innocence. Pious Uncle Joe gave such a heroic savor to the story of his early dissipations, that young people were apt to infer that wildness was only an indication of spirit, and that every whole-souled fellow was expected to rush into folly at some period of his life.

"But, as I was sayin' about George. He did a handsome business once, — that was arter he had sowed his wild oats. Young men will sow their wild oats, spite of everything. They don't realize they 've got a soul to lose. Ha!" ejaculated the ponderous carpenter, smacking his lips, as with a strong relish of the reminiscence, "I have experienced what hot blood is! I used to play jokes on the minister, — sendin' him a present of a bottle of brandy, or callin' him out of his bed at one o'clock at night on some Tom Fool's errand. Once I sent word that Calvin West — Cal West, we used to call him — a hard case!" said Uncle Joe, letting the words bubble up from his moist throat, with an air of enjoyment; "up to all sorts of mischief! — that Cal West lay on his death-bed, and wanted to talk with him about his soul. So the good Mr. Kerby jumps out of bed at midnight, and tramps through the muddy streets to Cal West's house, — rings up the old folks, and asks if the repentant sinner is still livin', — ha, ha, ha!" — the carpenter shook with laughter, — "while all the time Cal and I stood under the archway listenin' for the fun. But these things are too horrible to laugh at," he added, with humorous solemnity.

Cheesy did not think so. He relished the story so well that he

was exceedingly curious to hear the rest of the adventure, — to know what Cal's folks said, how the minister bore the joke, and whether the boys got found out and punished.

"Ah! it 's too bad to tell!" said the carpenter, gratified. "It was n't very smart in us boys — do you think it was? Bad boys — bad boys — we was, in them days. But, as I was sayin', George was doin' well, until his disappintment. That broke him down. He lost all ambition, and got to be melancholic, as you see him. He failed in business; he give up society too, — for George was quite a genteel fellow, at one time. It 's a great pity his disappintment did n't produce an awakenin' in his soul, — lead him into the paths of peace and pleasantness," said Uncle Joe, complacently. "I should rejoice to see George truly pious."

"What was his disappintment?"

"Have n't you observed how Robert Grayle is all broken down, too? And don't you see that his wife is all the time frettin' about something? Sister Emily did n't use to be so. She was as bright and cheerful a creatur' as you ever see, till the disappintment took her down. Now, she 's all the time in trouble. Fact, I don't know what she 'd do, if she had n't me to cheer her up, now and then."

"What did you say the disappintment was?" asked Cheesy.

"Ah!" said the portly carpenter, with a long liquid rattle in his throat, "that is holy ground! It must n't be profaned by idle feet. But listen, and I will tell ye a story. In a family I once knowed there was a cherished flower," — Uncle Joe delighted in mystery and metaphor, — "the sweetest, pootiest rose that ever was. It made the hull house fragrant; it stood for everything good, and beautiful, and — and sublime," added the carpenter,

conscious that no word was too fine to express his meaning. "It seemed as though the sun could n't a shone if it had n't been for that 'ere flower. It was poetry, and grace, and love itself. I can't begin to tell how everybody doted on it, — especially a foolish old uncle of the family, a man about my age and habit of body, who could n't sleep nights if he did n't get a peep at that 'ere sweet flower afore he went to bed. Sometimes she used to come — I mean, the flower used to come — into the shop where he was to work, and leave an odor behind her — behind it — that was delicious — that used to make his heart light and happy all day long. That 'ere flower could n't a been sot more by, skurcely, in the family where it belonged, than it was by me, — I mean, by the foolish old uncle. Wal, it grew and grew; other roses come arter it, sweet and pooty, but none so sweet and pooty as that. It was the fust and best — as if natur' had made her great effort, and could n't quite come up to it agin. Of course, the rose that all was praisin' — there was plenty to covet it; but only one could have it and wear it; and it was promised to one who was every way worthy, — a young man 'at you would n't find his equil in hundreds, — no, nor in thousands. Wal, the time was sot when he was to take the flower and transplant it into his own garden, when, one mornin', I stepped in to git a smell of my favoryte, — and it was gone," said the carpenter, softly laying his great hand on Cheesy's shoulder, and drawing him sympathetically towards him. "It had been stole away in the night. The house was a house of mournin'. 'T was as if death had been there. And it has been somehow holler and empty to this day; 't an't all right there, and never will be, for all the flowers that remain. The trouble broke the hearts of both parents — 't would a broke the uncle's heart too, but he was stayed up by the Chris-

tian's faith. It went hardest of all, though, with poor George — I mean with that 'ere worthy young man; for it was — think of that!" exclaimed the carpenter, dramatically, — "it was a friend he had trusted that stole away the flower! At a blow he lost everything; and always arter that he used to go once a week regular into that 'ere house where the flower was, and set thinkin' it all over, as if it was a dream he was tryin' to realize, but could n't somehow git holt on exactly."

"Was Mr. Leviston going to marry the girl who run away?" asked the incautious Cheesy.

"Who 's said anything about a girl running away?" demanded Uncle Joe, in a moist growl.

"That 's what you mean, an't it?" faltered the boy, conscious of having committed an indiscretion.

"You 're treadin' on holy ground," said the carpenter, in his hoarse whisper. "Who has been tellin' you about it?"

"Sol Civett, in the store; but I did n't know whether it was true."

"Look here — "

Uncle Joe took Cheesy solemnly by the collar, and, raising his cane in an impressive attitude, stood ready to impart a piece of profound wisdom for his benefit. But the carpenter was too near home; he was, in fact, standing upon his own door-step. At that moment the door opened abruptly, and a thin, sharp-featured female demanded, in a shrill voice, why "father" did n't come into the house, — she should think it was time.

"Wal, wal, mother," replied Uncle Joe, in a conciliatory tone; "I 'm comin' right in."

"Why can't you come now? I 've been waitin' for you this hour and more. Don't stand talkin' in the street all night, father!"

"Anything for peace," whispered Uncle Joe. "Good-night, my young friend, good-night."

Cheesy dreaded the sound of Mrs. Kevill's voice, and was ready enough to go. As for the carpenter, his broad bulk passed through the doorway, the door was closed behind him, and his young friend could hear, as he ran down the street, the sound of a stormy tongue, that rattled its sharp hail in volleys upon the good old gentleman's resigned and peaceful pate.

A few days after, Cheesy was invited to take tea with the Grayle family. This was the first time the honor had been extended to him, and he was highly elated by it. He accordingly put on a clean shirt at noon, and went to the store, prepared to walk home with the book-keeper.

It was a memorable day for Cheesy. First, there was the storm, — the wildest of the season, — which produced an exhilarating effect upon his spirits. Then, in the afternoon, when he was out on an errand, he met with a surprise in the shape of an old acquaintance. It was the inebriate, Caleb Thorne. He grasped Cheesy with a suddenness and energy which gave him quite a fright.

"Don't, now! What do you want with me?" gasped the boy. "Say, Mr. Thorne! don't! I han't done nothing to injure you, have I? — say!"

But the poor man meant no harm. Almost frantic in the hope of hearing from his lost child, — almost fierce in his eagerness to press out of Cheesy some information that would lead to her discovery, — he did not observe that his grasp was rumpling his clean collar, and subjecting his throat to an uncomfortable pressure.

"Le' go, and I 'll tell you all about it," said Cheesy. "She 's

with Mr. Mer'vale; they 're boarding to Mr. Wormlett's, in Portland-street. I 'll direct you so 's 't you can't miss your way."

Having succeeded in ridding himself of that nightmare of a man, the boy hurried back to the store, through the storm. His nerves were quite unstrung; but the excitement of the event was soon forgotten in his anticipations of the evening; and he had quite recovered his equanimity when he set out to walk home with old Grayle.

The storm had not abated. On the contrary, it had increased in violence since the night set in. The air was full of a fine, sharp snow, which came in whirling clouds and swift-darting squads, careering through the streets. The wind blew in fitful, angry gusts. It shrieked and whistled and roared. In places, the pavements were quite bare, while in every nook and corner sheltered from the blast, smooth drifts swept up in graceful curves, and cones, and delicately-turned ridges, — a wild profusion of architecture, whose fantastic beauty no artist's hand could ever reproduce. In protected spots under the lee of house-walls, by door-steps and archways, on casements and railings, white wreaths were lavishly displayed. Here and there the walks were covered with heavy banks intersected by narrow footpaths, where half-blinded pedestrians struggled past each other, with garments fluttering, and with straining and creaking umbrellas.

With his coat buttoned to his chin, and his collar turned up about his ears, Cheesy accompanied old Grayle, — sometimes plunging into the whirling snow-clouds before him, now trotting by his side, and again following breathless, with his head down, at his heels. When they reached the house in Pleasant-street, both were a good deal exhausted; but the door flew open before them;

they were welcomed into a warm and cheerful room, and ready hands took their hats and coats, and swept their snowy feet.

"Gracious!" said Cheesy, "this is one of the nights, an't it? How my ears begin to burn! How did you stand it, Mr. Grayle?"

The book-keeper, pulling off his boots by the stove, and putting on a pair of slippers Ellen brought him, made answer, with his subdued smile, that he had seen too many storms, in his day, to be much troubled by a little flurry of snow.

"There was one blast," returned Cheesy, "I thought would a knocked me over. It was ten minutes before I could breathe."

"Ten minutes!" exclaimed Benjie, in the corner, incredulously. "A man can't live ten minutes without breathing."

"Hush, Benjie!" said Ellen. "You 're always trying to show folks how much you know. Attend to your geography."

"I 've got my lesson!" cried the boy, shutting his book, and beginning to dance around the room. "Now I 'm ready for some fun, with the rest of ye. An't it about time for Uncle Joe to be along?"

"Come, don't make so much noise," said Ellen. "There! I knew you would knock that chair over. You 'd better be careful. It went right on Cheesy's foot."

"Did n't hurt," spoke up Cheesy, grinning.

"I must do something to make you scold, Nell; and I may as well knock over the chairs as anything," said Benjie. "Look out!" — he pushed the chair adroitly before her as she was going across the room. "There! I knew you would trip your foot. You should look out."

"Father! I wish you would make this boy behave himself," complained Ellen. "He 's all the time up to some sort of mis-

chief. I came pretty near falling against the stove, through his nonsense."

"Why can't you behave yourself, my son?" mildly asked old Grayle.

"'Cause it an't in me, I suppose," replied Benjie. "I hurried to get my lessons, and now I want some fun. Ellen feels grand 'cause it 's her birth-day, and she 's fourteen years old!"

"Come, come, children! What will Cheesy think of you, if he sees you always quarrelling?"

"It is n't my fault," insisted Ellen.

If it was, it made no difference with Cheesy. It was easy to tell what he thought of her. The air of authority she had learned to assume towards the younger children impressed him with admiration, and whether she smiled or frowned, spoke sharply like her mother, or softly like herself, or laughed her gay and silvery laugh, he was always charmed. No matter how many faults she had, he could see in her nothing but beauty and perfection.

"Hettie, come away from that window, will you?" she cried, impatiently. "What have you got the curtain up for, after the lamp is lighted?"

"You had it up yourself, half a minute ago, when you expected father and Cheesy," retorted the child, with her fair cheek pressed against the pane. "I 'm looking for Uncle Joe. O, goodie! there comes somebody through the gate! I guess it 's him."

"It 's Uncle Joe and Aunt Lucia!" exclaimed Benjie, putting his face over her shoulder. "That 's real mean! It 'll just spoil our fun to-night. I was in hopes she would n't come."

"That 's a pretty way to talk about your relations," observed Ellen. "I should think you 'd be ashamed."

"I don't care; I heard you say, yourself, just before dark,

you *did* hope we should n't see Aunt Lucia here to-night, — the very words you used."

"Children! children!" said Mr. Grayle, in a tone of gentle reproof. "Go and open the door, Benjie, and don't let me hear any more of your foolish talk."

The arrival of the Kevills was an event of some magnitude. The ponderous bulk of Uncle Joe, accompanied by his broad, good-natured face, came crowding through the door-way, while Aunt Lucia followed close behind, scolding him for taking her out in such a storm.

"Fie, fie!" said Uncle Joe, in his best humor; "you know I did n't urge you to come. 'Do jest as you please about it,' says I. 'It 's such a stormy night,' says I, 'that Robert's folks won't think hard if you don't go,' says I."

"I should n't think they would!" whispered Benjie.

"The wind liked to a blowed me away half a dozen times," complained Mrs. Kevill. "If I 'd a knowed anything about what the weather was, I 'm sure I should n't a ventered out."

"Well, well, my dear," said Uncle Joe, "the wust is over; and now le' 's enjoy the visit. As for the weather — I told you what it was. You did n't believe me, though. You thought I did n't want you to come, and so took that way to discourage you; but you wan't goin' to be frightened out of a pleasant evenin' that way, you said."

"I did n't say no such thing!" burst forth Aunt Lucia, shrilly. "You provoke me to death, when you talk so. I said I did n't think you wanted me to go, — I wan't sayin' anything about the storm. You never like to have me spend the evenin' with you; and you would n't a asked me to come to-night, if you had n't a knowed that I 'd git blowed to pieces."

"Come, come, mother," remonstrated Uncle Joe. "Don't git excited. We 're here now in Robert's comfortable sett'n'-room. Nothin' to prevent our bein' happy, 'cept the memory of two other shinin' eyes, — brighter 'n your'n, Nellie, — that should a been here to-night," he added, softly, — "but never 'll be here no more, I 'm afeared. Forgive me, Rob: I could n't help the allusion."

"Bring the big chair for Uncle Joseph, Benjie," observed Mr. Grayle, in a tremulous voice, while his eyes glistened. "Your aunt's side-comb has dropped out, Ellen. Why don't you help her find it before it gets trod on?"

"Don't trouble yourself, miss, I beg of you," said Mrs. Kevill, in a tone of bitter irony, as she searched the floor. "I can take care of myself. I 'm used to 't. You 'd better set down and be a lady, — it 'll be much more becomin', I 'm sure. It an't ginteel to wait on old people now-days, I understand."

"How should I know what you dropped?" demanded Ellen, indignant. "Here it is."

She picked up the comb, and gave it to her aunt with not a very good grace, putting out her pretty lips in a manner which made the admiring Cheesy grin from ear to ear.

"Well, Benjie, how does school go?" asked Uncle Joseph, anxious to divert attention from his wife's ill humor. "Are you a pretty good boy now-days, eh? You never play truant, I hope. Only naughty boys do that, — and they 're always sorry for 't in after years. Ah!" in his liquid, guttural voice, "I don't know what I would n't give, if I 'd 'tended to my book as I ought to 've done, when I was a boy."

"Did you use to play truant?" inquired Benjie, who delighted to hear his uncle's reminiscences of youthful scrapes.

"I used to be up to all sorts of mischief, — the more shame for

me!" said Uncle Joe, with a thin veneering of humility outside of the carnal timber of vanity, of which no small share entered into the composition of his character. "I used to run away and go coastin', when I should a been larnin' my spellin'-book and jography. Then what stories I made up! I remember once, arter I 'd been off three days, and expected to be licked within an inch o' my life, I went and told the teacher 'at I 'd only jest come for my books, cause our folks had moved, and I was goin' to another school. So he gi'n me an honorable what-ye-call-it — dismissal, and was glad to git red of me, too, for he could n't do nothin' with me, I was so full of mischief. Ha! what a bad boy I was!" — with a solemn grimace. "I was off playin' with wicked companions three weeks 'fore our folks knowed but what I was goin' to school reg'lar, and gitt'n' all my lessons like a paragon. I got found out, though, as all bad boys do, — remember that, Benjie; all bad boys gits found out, sooner or later. The teacher stopped some of our folks, one day, to ask how I was doin' at my new school, when, of course, the cat was all out of the bag. We had n't moved at all, you know; so I was sent back to the old school — but I managed, somehow, to git clear of the lickin'. Took me to look out for that."

"Was n't that slick?" cried the delighted Benjie.

"It was very naughty," replied Uncle Joe, in a self-reprobative tone. "You must n't never go and do nothin' of that sort. Mind what I tell ye."

At that moment, Mrs. Grayle, flushed and excited with her cooking, made her appearance from the kitchen.

"How do you do, this evening, Lucia?" she asked, in a depressed manner, sinking upon a chair Ellen hastened to place for her.

"I 'm as well as I could reasonably expect to be," replied Mrs.

Kevill, still rocking to and fro in the unhappy state of feeling occasioned by the incident of the comb. "But I an't well. I've everything to worry me; and, more 'n all that, I suppose I always shall have."

"I can't conceive how that is. Your children are all well married off, and you've a nice little property to live on in your old age. I don't see what should worry *you*, I'm sure. Ellen," added Mrs. Grayle, heaving a sigh, "pass me my handkerchief off the bureau." She wiped her eyes, with an air of melancholy resignation, and proceeded: "If you'd seen my trouble, I doubt if you'd be alive this day. How I've lived through it, is more than I know. But I won't complain. The Lord's will be done."

"Amen!" said the pious carpenter, in a deep voice, as if he enjoyed it.

"Ellen," resumed Mrs. Grayle, "go out and see to the biscuit. I think I smell them."

"I should think you'd keep that great girl in the kitchen more 'n you do," observed Mrs. Kevill, in her sour way. "You make too much of a lady of her."

"O, Ellen is very good to help," sighed Mrs. Grayle.

"No, but you pet her too much; she 's gitt'n' to be quite stiff and proud. She 'll be goin' the way of the other one, if you don't look out."

At this allusion, Robert Grayle's head dropped sadly on his breast, and his wife began to weep. Ellen, who stood in the kitchen-door, waiting to hear what was said, flushed crimson, and disappeared from Cheesy's admiring gaze, as if ashamed.

"Come, come, mother," spoke up Uncle Joe, with Hettie on his knee, "don't open the wounds afresh. Don't spile this 'ere birth-day of Ellen's with allusions to her poor sister."

"I han't said nothin' 't I did n't feel it my duty to say," was Aunt Lucia's sharp retort. "When I see a young person in danger, I must speak about it. Forewarned, forearmed. Ellen 's jest like her sister; and the great fault with her sister was, she was made too much a lady of. You know that, as well as I do. I 've heard you speak on 't time and time agin; and you can't say the contrary; so, there!"

"Well, well," said Mrs. Grayle, weeping, "I suppose you will continue to think as you please, and make your remarks just as you please. I 've not a word to offer. Though, Heaven knows, I never meant to spoil my poor, misguided child; and I don't think I did. It 's very true, she did n't like the kitchen over and above well; and I don't blame her, for we were better off then than we are now."

"There wan't the necessity of her takin' holt," cried the carpenter, soothingly. "And young folks an't apt to be right down smart, without they 're drove to 't. I remember how it was with me, when I was a boy. I was one of the greatest scapegraces you ever heard on, Benjie. Think of your sober old uncle inventin' all sorts of tricks to git red of work! Dear me! what headaches, and lame backs, and phthisics, I used to have! I could play ball, and go a fishin', though, when I was the sickest. Ah! I was a bad boy — a bad boy, I was, Benjie, till long arter I went to larn my trade. Han't you noticed how much better grammar your mother talks 'n I do? It all comes of my bein' with evil companions, when I should a been to school."

"Give me that newspaper, Benjie," said Mrs. Grayle, in a feeble voice. "I must cool off a little, or I can't eat a mouthful of supper. Being over that stove takes away all my appetite. Well," she continued, fanning herself with the paper, "I suppose

we may as well go out pretty soon. How are the biscuits, Ellen?"

"They 're burnt, just the least mite in the world, on one side," replied Ellen.

"You should seen to them biscuit, without bein' told," remarked the dictatorial aunt. "If you 'd been anyways thoughtful, as a great girl like you should be, they would n't a been burnt."

"I guess they are not spoilt," retorted Ellen, with spirit. "If they are, nobody 's obliged to eat them, as I know of."

"Ellen, my child!" said Mrs. Grayle.

"Come, come; the biscuit an't hurt, I 'm sure," cried the carpenter, jovially. "So don't fret, mother. And, if they was, Ellen would be excusable, seein' it 's her birth-day. Give your rough old uncle one kiss, my pooty, then we 'll go to supper."

The company adjourned to the kitchen, where the table was set, — Uncle Joe and the fair Ellen leading the van, and Cheesy and Aunt Lucia bringing up the rear.

"Sit right down where it comes handy," said Mrs. Grayle, taking the tea from the stove. "Ellen, you 'd better dish the preserves. I put that cold meat on the table, thinking your Uncle Joseph might like some. Perhaps Cheseboro' would like a little, too."

"We 'll see about that, mother," replied old Grayle, with his subdued smile. "Take a seat here, Cheesy."

"O!" exclaimed Cheesy.

He came forward, bashful and grinning, and occupied the chair between Ellen and her father. He acted as if he hardly knew what to do with himself generally, and seemed altogether at a loss how to dispose of his hands in particular. Aunt Lucia was feeling much aggrieved because she had been left behind with Cheesy and the

children; Benjie was angry, because, Ellen having told him he must put on his coat before coming to the table, his father had upheld her authority; and Hettie cried because she could not sit next to Uncle Joe. Furthermore, Mrs. Grayle was full of unhappy apologies, designed, probably, to lead her guests to expect little from her board, in order that they might be agreeably surprised.

"I never can do anything to suit me, in this house," she complained, dejectedly. "Before we moved, I used to think I could set a decent table; but somehow the charm was broken, the day we came into Pleasant-street. I have n't that to do with I had then, and I suppose that has a good deal to do with it. I ought to make good biscuit, though, any time and anywhere."

"Good biscuit?" cried Uncle Joe. "I han't seen so jolly a biscuit as this is, for many a day."

"To be sure, we never have anything good to home!" said Aunt Lucia, in her bitterest tone.

Uncle Joe was a great lover of the delights of the table. His countenance radiated with good humor over his cold meat, hot biscuit and tea, in a manner which defied depressing influences of any kind. He seemed but to glow and dilate the more for every unhappy look and for every sour word let fall around him. His geniality was magnetic. His hearty laughter was contagious. The smiles of his broad red face were inspiring. The undulation of his vast waistcoat was suggestive of mirth, though nothing was said. Cheesy forgot his conscious awkwardness, and Benjie forgot the disgrace he had suffered at Ellen's hands, in listening to the carpenter's jokes and stories. Even cross Aunt Lucia became susceptible to cheerful influences, inspired by her husband's conviviality, and Mrs. Grayle's vigorous tea. The book-keeper appeared quite lively and talkative, for him, and his wife was in

unusually good spirits. Hattie was in high glee, and Ellen was radiant with happiness.

After supper the pious carpenter produced a birth-day present he had brought in his great-coat pocket. It was a handsome Bible, with gilt edges and a brilliant clasp, and showy enough for the most ostentatious Christian in the world. Ellen, who had no lack of Bibles, could have better appreciated some more secular gift, perhaps; yet she received it with a grace which quite charmed her old uncle.

"Father would n't tell me how much that 'ere Bible cost," — Mrs. Kevill broke in upon the flow of good feeling on the occasion, — "but, you see, Ellen, it 's a very costly present; better 'n he could afford to make, I told him; and enough on 't better 'n any one of our children ever got from uncle or aunt. But he had his way, and I only hope you 'll try to show a proper gratitude for it. I was goin' to make you quite a handsome present of some kind, myself; but, arter he got the Bible, I did n't feel as though I was able to do much that way; so I hope you 'll take the will for the deed, and be satisfied with a bran-new pin-cushion and a knitt'n'-sheath that was your cousin Sally's. Here they be, if I can git 'em out of my pocket. Why, what ails my dress?" Aunt Lucia began to wax impatient. "I never see the beat on 't! This pocket never did suit me. Here they come, arter so much fuss."

She produced a cotton handkerchief tied up into a big knot, and took out the articles in question. The pin-cushion, a thick, awkward, ill-shaped article, — at a short distance it looked like a toad, — she handed Ellen with a triumphant air, asserting that she had made it with her own hands expressly for her niece. Ellen laughed, and thanked her, and put the presents away with

others she had that day received. Benjie had given her something; so had her parents, and so had Hettie; a circumstance which made Cheesy feel so miserable and mean, on account of his poverty, that he wished he had something to make a present of, though it were nothing more than a fat pin-cushion.

At eight o'clock, William, the oldest son, a youth of nineteen, made his appearance, and brought his present, — a handsome work-box. William kept in an apothecary-shop, and could not leave his business earlier, even on his sister's birth-day. He had been expected with impatience; and now the children ran delightedly to meet him, his parents received him with pride and pleasure, and Uncle Joe welcomed him boisterously. William was a fellow of capital spirits. He always had fun enough for the children, and his hopeful face was cheering to his father and mother. He was a violent reformer, and some of his arguments with his conservative uncle were exceedingly spicy; the heavy broadsides of the stout old gentleman's dogmatism being altogether unequal to the young man's sharp-shooting radicalism and quick-flashing wit. But this evening William was not himself. A settled care clouded his brow and checked his mirth.

"I want to see you in the other room a minute, father," said he, after shaking the snow from his clothes.

Robert Grayle retired with his son. After a brief absence he returned with a troubled face, and whispered to his wife.

"I 'd like to know what 's going on," said Aunt Lucia, peevishly, as Robert and Mrs. Grayle started together for the kitchen. "I hate this whispering — whispering."

"Fie, fie, mother!" replied Uncle Joe. "If it 's anything concerns us, we shall hear on 't; if it an't, it 's none of our business. Well, sis, who beats this time?" to Ellen, who was playing backgammon with Cheesy.

"O, it is n't decided yet, quite," said Ellen.

"She beats me, all holler!" exclaimed Cheesy, grinning. "I can't begin to play with her. I guess you don't want to have another game, do ye?"

"O, yes," cried Ellen. She was wondering what William could have to communicate to her parents, and appeared a little absent-minded. "I 'm pretty sure you 'll beat me this time."

"I can't never beat *you!*"

"You must n't be discouraged. You are a new beginner, you know. — Benjie!" cried Ellen, putting down her foot, with her charming authoritative air, "come away! Do you hear?"

The boy was stealing into the kitchen, moved by a curiosity to hear what William was telling his parents.

"It 's nothing to you, if I do go in there," he muttered.

"Yes, it is," said Ellen, firmly. "They 'll let you know when you 're wanted. — Your first throw, Cheesy. Double-sixes! You 'll be sure to beat me this time. Benjamin!"

"Well, I an't going in there; you need n't trouble yourself!"

In the mean while, Uncle Joe, diverting Hettie from the kitchen, by showing her the interior of his huge silver watch, manifested his enjoyment at the innocent stratagem by winking complacently over her head at Ellen and Cheesy. Aunt Lucia, on the other hand, rocked herself to and fro, with an injured air, and kept muttering to herself, until the guilty conspirators — as she appeared to consider them — returned from the kitchen. Old Grayle was pale and thoughtful, and his wife was weeping fitfully. William's face was still clouded; and all three were silent on the mysterious topic.

Suddenly Aunt Lucia put away her knitting-work, arose from her chair, with compressed lips and a toss of her head, and began to put on her bonnet and shawl.

"You are not going?" said the subdued voice of old Grayle.

She made no answer, but compressed her lips more firmly, gave her head another toss, and commenced tying her bonnet-strings.

"Come, come, mother," cried Uncle Joe; "don't be so techy. Set down, and le''s have a good time, now William has come. Be a Christian, mother; be a Christian."

"Do you mean to tell me I an't?" demanded Aunt Lucia.

"Fie, fie, mother! keep your temper."

"Keep my temper! — Don't I keep my temper? I'd like to know who does, if I don't! I don't believe there 's another so patient a woman in the world as me! There 's no tellin' how much I suffer, and keep silent," she added, peevishly. "I 'm trod on, and run over, and knocked about, every way, and no word of complaint do I ever utter. But there are things an angel could n't bear. There is a pint where forbearance ceases to be a virtew."

Uncle Joe gathered up his brows, shrugged his shoulders, and favored his sister with certain mysterious winks and gestures, indicating that she was expected to say something of a soothing nature, to pacify his wife.

"I don't know who has insulted you, Lucia," sighed Mrs. Grayle, under her handkerchief. "If I have, I 'm sorry. Like as not, I have; for I 'm well-nigh distracted; I hardly know what I 'm about."

Mrs. Kevill went on, hooking her cloak, with a determined look, without making any reply.

"Why do you go?" insisted Mrs. Grayle.

"Let her go, — I would!" whispered Benjie.

"I don't want to be in anybody's way!" cried Aunt Lucia, stiffly. "I've got a home to go to, thank Heaven! I an't obleeged to intrude on nobody's privacy."

"Privacy? You don't intrude on any privacy here."

"O, I don't, then! I thought I did. I thought somebody went into the other room, 'cause they had secrets that wan't for my ear. It 's all right, of course! I don't complain. Only I don't like to be in the way, and put people to so much trouble. Come, father; be gitt'n' on your gre't coat."

Upon this, Mrs. Grayle burst into a flood of tears. Uncle Joe began to remonstrate.

"Never mind," said William, with an exasperated look. "I 'll go home with you with pleasure, Aunt Lucia. Sit still, Uncle Joe. You don't want to go yet, I know."

He threw on his coat in a resolute manner, which quite had the effect of reducing the good woman's spirits. She began to falter, and apologize, and declare that she should n't have thought of going, if she had n't supposed she was in the way.

"You are not in the way; and we have no secrets we desire to keep from you," broke forth Mrs. Grayle, sobbing. "I did n't like to speak of it before the children; but I shall have to, I suppose, and I may as well do it first as last. My poor, misguided child has come back to Boston; that 's all."

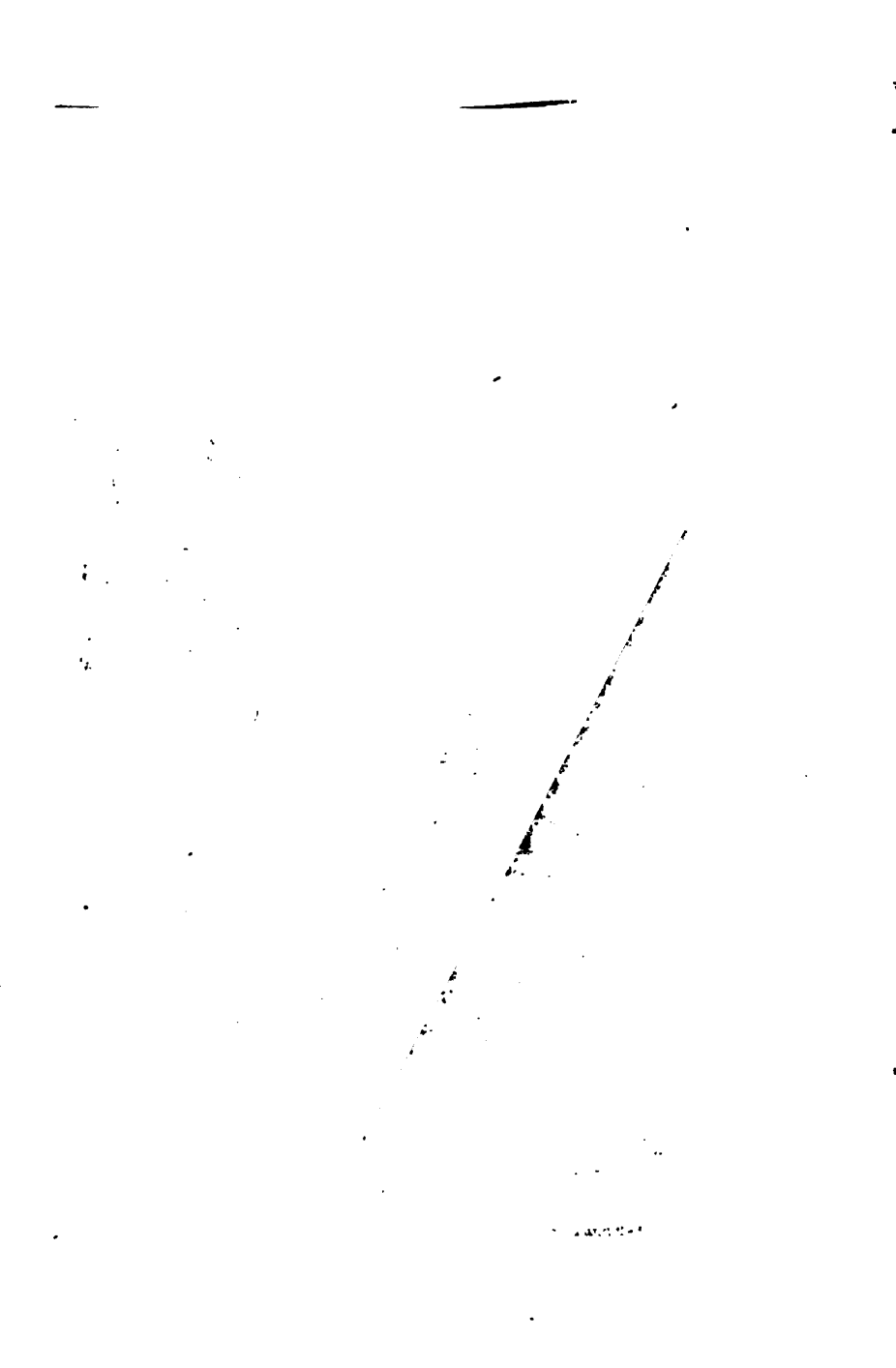
"Come back! Clara come back!" echoed Uncle Joe, starting forward eagerly in his chair.

Mrs. Grayle wept; her husband hung his head, with patient sorrow; and William's dark eyes sought the floor.

"Dear me!" cried Aunt Lucia; "where is she? Who has seen her?"

"William saw her to-day," replied Mrs. Grayle, in her most distressed voice. "She went by the old house, he says, looking up at the windows. It was in the storm; she was all wrapped up; she acted as if she was afraid of being seen, but waited to

"She started back with a wild look and a stifled cry, then turned and fled." p. 324.



see some of us; — she probably did not know that we had moved, poor child!"

"Did you speak to her?" demanded the excited carpenter.

"No," replied William. "She saw me, and ran away. Whether she knew me or not, I cannot say."

"O, dear!" groaned Uncle Joe, "why did n't you take arter her? Why did n't you ketch her, and tell her that she has still got a home to go to, and friends to love her? If I should have a glimpse of that sweet face of her'n, do you think I would leave her track till I 'd fairly got her in my arms, and kissed that cheek that used to be so innocent and sweet, and told her she 'd got an old uncle that dotes on her more 'n ever? Not I!" exclaimed the flushed carpenter; "not I! Only give me one glimpse of her, and you 'll see!"

Uncle Joe was not aware how soon an opportunity might occur to test the validity of his speech.

It required some time for the excitement occasioned by the intelligence William brought to subside. At length, however, there was a hush. Mrs. Grayle sat with her handkerchief to her eyes. Her husband's face was sad and downcast. Cheesy and Ellen finished their game of backgammon, conversing in whispers, while William looked on listlessly. Benjie and Hettie hearkened to Uncle Joe, who was relating a solemn story of his boyish indiscretions, speaking in a low growl. Only Aunt Lucia ventured to raise her voice to its usual pitch, — which, we need not say, was a high one, — and moralize on the painful subject that had been broached.

"Did n't the bell ring?" asked Hettie.

"Yes, it did," said Ellen. "Benjie, go to the door."

"Wait, Uncle Joe; don't tell any further till I come back."

Benjie hastened to the entry, to answer the bell, and a moment later the figure of a woman, all covered with snow, appeared in the doorway.

"There 's a man with a blind girl at your door," she articulated, almost breathlessly. She threw back her veil, and exposed a pale, careworn, but still beautiful face. "I found them out here perishing, and —"

Her eyes, becoming accustomed to the light, fell upon the figures in the room; she started back, with a wild look and a stifled cry, endeavoring hurriedly to hide her face; then turned and fled. It was like an apparition. She vanished in the night and storm, before one present could utter a word, or lift a hand to stay her flight. The children huddled together, pale with terror. Uncle Joe was the first to recover his self-possession. He rushed out, unmindful of hat or coat. "Stop! stop!" he cried. "Clara! don't you know your old uncle?"

The storm drowned his voice. Old Grayle and William followed; but at the door they found the poor inebriate, endeavoring to lift the frail form of his perishing child, whom the stout carpenter, in passing, had thrown down in the drifts. They took her up and bore her into the midst of the excited group; the father, bewildered, reeled in after them; the lamplight fell upon his haggard features and disordered dress, and revealed, to the astonished beholders, the sweet face of his child.

"By gracious!" whispered Cheesy, hoarsely, in Ellen's ear; "if it an't Caleb Thorne and the little blind girl!"

XXII.

IN THE COUNTRY.

THE stage was crowded, and the passengers were growing impatient.

"Why don't that miserable driver start?" cried one, putting his head out into the storm. "Hello, you, teamster! where be you?"

The tempest and the whirling snow stifled his voice, and he was fain to withdraw his head, and shut the window.

"He's gone to warm his fingers," growled another. "Open that window again, and let me try my lungs." The window was opened; in came the blast and the snow, and out went the head of the growler. "Dr-i-v-e-r!" he roared, at the top of his voice, three times, with increasing fury. Suddenly he changed his tune. "There! by Judas! if the wind han't got my hat!"

Wishing the driver in a place where — if the legend be true — fingers may be warmed gratuitously, and where snow-storms are

supposed, from the nature of things, to be impossible, the growler — perhaps we should call him the roarer — jumped out of the vehicle, and disappeared in the storm and darkness, chasing his hat.

"I 'd let my hat go, and make the driver pay for it," said a squeaking voice in the corner. "This is a shameful imposition. I declare, if it is n't night!"

"No, 't an't night, neither," observed an easy old gentleman, whose corpulency almost extinguished the slender owner of the squeaking voice. "'T an't much after four, if 't is that. You see, the storm makes it appear later 'n it re'ly is."

"It 's late enough, at all events," spoke up one of the female passengers. "Here we 've been all day coming from Boston, — only think of it! a trip that it never ought to take over an hour and a half to make, at the furthest."

"But, you know," remonstrated the corpulent gentleman, good-humoredly, "we 've had snow-drifts to dig out and plough through; then the cars got off the track — how many times was it? — I forgit; I was busy reading a newspaper, and did n't mind. — You see, such storms is n't very favorable to railroad travelling."

"Well, we need n't be made to wait all night, now we 're here," retorted the matron. "The stage is full, — why don't we go along, I 'd like to know?"

At that moment the driver made his appearance, and put his head in at the door.

"Room for one more?"

"No," cried the squeaking voice. "We 're crowded a'ready."

"Not much, be we?" asked the corpulent gentleman, with a hitch towards his slender companion.

"Here! I shall be crushed!"

"Dear me! I would n't crush you for the world, my young friend. But there 's a lady in the case. We must make room for her, somehow."

"Don't you get my seat!" growled the growler, reäppearing with his hat. "The stage is full," he added, climbing in. "What ye waiting for, driver?"

"I 've been helping this young woman find her baggage."

"Well, I don't see what you will do with her, after all."

"Never mind," said the fair passenger, — her face was veiled, but, judging from the sweet tone of her voice, and the outlines of her form, dimly seen in the obscurity, you would have pronounced her fair. "I will ride outside."

Thereupon a young man, who had been all day in the cars, and who, having learned patience through much tribulation, had seated himself at the corpulent gentleman's right hand, as if prepared to remain all night in the stage, aroused himself from his moody posture, and offered the young lady his place.

"No, thank you," said she, with dignity. "Keep your seat, sir. I can ride outside."

The young man jumped to the ground, however, and insisted on her taking his place.

"You better," cried the driver. "You 'd git blowed away on top, I tell ye."

"Settle it somehow, and be quick," growled the growler from his retreat.

The young lady made haste to get into the sleigh, — for the stage was on runners, — thanking the young man for his kindness; while he, exhilarated by the change of position, mounted the box with the driver, and wrapped himself around about with the folds of a horse-blanket.

"Le' 's see," said the driver, cracking his whip, "wnere was I to leave you? At Colonel Merrivale's?"

Martin answered in the affirmative.

"You 're the man, then, that was asking how the colonel was? I was too busy to talk to you, jest then. Fact, I han't heard from there since day before yesterday."

"How was he then?" asked the anxious traveller.

The horses were dashing forward through the flying snow-clouds; the gale was blowing furiously; and he was obliged to shout in order to make himself heard. The driver had good ears, as well as a sociable disposition, and shouted back.

"They did n't think he 'd live the night through, I heard."

"You don't know whether he is still living, then?"

"No, I 'm sure I don't. I should have heard on 't, though, if he had died 'fore this morning. Everybody knows the colonel, and his death would make a noise."

"How far is it to Summer Hill?"

"About two miles from the station. 'T won't take us long to drive there. There 's some hard travelling when we come to the cross-road, though. Look out for your hat."

The stage got on very well, and Martin looked out for his hat, until the cross-road was reached. Suddenly, as the horses were beginning to plunge through the drifts, he uttered a cry, and made a hasty snatch at something which went flying off into the stormy air like a monstrous bat.

"There you be!" said the driver. "Jest as I expected."

"Don't wait for me," cried Martin, shaking off the blanket. "I can overtake you."

He jumped down, and the stage went on without him, laboring through the drifts. He rushed to a corner of the fence where his

hat had lodged, and reached the spot just in time to see that useful piece of property shoot between a pair of rails, and go flying off again across the country. To climb the fence, take a long leap into the drift on the other side, and wallow on to the broad field from which the snow was mostly swept away, was not exactly the work of a moment; but, certainly, Martin accomplished the feat with surprising swiftness and agility, considering the obstructions to be overcome. In the mean time his hat had blown off nearly a quarter of a mile, and lodged in a whortleberry-bush, on the other side of the pasture.

Martin had the wind in his favor. In that respect he enjoyed equal advantages with his hat. But in bulk, shape and manner of locomotion, the hat possessed such a decided superiority over the man's body and limbs, that, by the time its owner approached the whortleberry-bush, it was well rested, and ready for a fresh start. Accordingly, the moment he stooped to seize the wary fugitive, it frisked out of its retreat, ran up the snow-drift, which formed an inclined plane, or rather curve, to the summit of the next fence, and darted down the other side, carrying the war into the adjoining field.

Out of breath, bare-headed, his hair flying in the gale, Martin paused an instant, amazed, and uncertain what to do. This was a new kind of steeple-chase, affording sport to the pursued, and only vexation and chagrin to the pursuer. But he did not hesitate long. The thought of appearing at his uncle's house without his hat spurred his energies, and he repeated the feat of scrambling over the fence, not quite so nimbly as before, perhaps, yet with considerable despatch. He was in time to see something black skim away across the plain, in the rushing waves of snow, and disappear in the darkness.

The second field also Martin traversed, running before the wind. Once more he came upon deep drifts, and plunged into them above his knees, before he was aware of the vicinity of the fence. He slackened his speed, and looked about him for his hat. It was now so dark, and the air was so full of snow, that he could scarcely distinguish a tree a few yards distant. It seemed almost impossible, then, that he should be able to find his hat; he was, in fact, on the point of giving up the search in despair, when he discovered it jammed in between two rails, and nearly filled with snow. He seized it, emptied it of its contents, and placed it on his head.

"I 've got you at last, my bird!" said he, triumphantly. "Try that trick again, if you please."

The hat seemed inclined to try it, notwithstanding the defiance. Martin was still muttering when a sudden blast took him, as he was struggling to get out of the banks, and blew him over. He stretched forth his hands to save himself; the opportunity was too good to be lost; off flew his hat again; it whirled up twenty feet into the air, and alighted somewhere in the neighboring field.

Still the persevering Martin pursued. But, finding himself in a hilly region, with rocks, and hollows full of snow, on every side, he was compelled to abandon the hope of discovering his lost property. He kept on, however, directly before the gale, until he came to a lane, where certain drifts appeared, lying several feet deep, between the fences. Here he paused; reluctantly acknowledged to himself that he was outwitted and beaten by a hat; and turned back, not a little exasperated, to retrace his steps to the cross-road and the stage.

This was a more difficult undertaking than he had anticipated.

Night had fairly set in; his foot-prints were obliterated; he could see nothing before him but a wild, gloomy waste, enveloped in clouds of snow. The fierce gale struck him in the face with stinging whips; its fury took away his breath and blinded his eyes. The storm within the city was mild in comparison with that which revelled on the unsheltered mountain side. Even the athletic and resolute Martin could make no headway against it. Besides, he suffered inexpressibly; so that, after indulging for some minutes in the insane hope of beating up to the cross-road, he turned his back despairingly, and once more sailed down before the wind. Already he had taken the precaution to tie a handkerchief over his head, and now, with his surtout-collar — a large one, fortunately — turned up about his ears, he was able to proceed quite comfortably, all things considered.

Martin saw plainly in what danger he was. He likened himself to a sailor lost overboard, and drifting off, benighted, on an unknown sea. His only hope of safety lay in being cast upon some friendly shore. Yet, in peril as he was, he scarce regretted the adventure. To an imaginative mind like his, there was a sublimity in the hour worth days of peaceful beauty. Rejoicing in the majesty of the tempest; expanding with a sense of freedom, in the savage solitude of that dark, stormy waste; hatless, his boots and trousers filled with snow, he wandered on, trusting to the all-watchful Spirit to guide him forth from that scene of desolation. Through hard drifts he struggled; fences he climbed; by reeling and roaring trees he passed; and still onward into the awful night he journeyed blindly, until at length a shadowy shape loomed up in the misty obscurity before him. He was almost under it before he discovered its dim outlines; when, with a thrill of satisfaction, he perceived that he was running against a barn!

He turned to the right, climbed a gate, and tramped through the snow towards a red ray of light which glimmered from the window of a cottage beyond. He gave an energetic knock at the door; it was opened readily; and in went Martin, with a whirlwind that filled the room with fine siftings of snow.

"I don't believe I can shut the door!" cried the boy who had opened it, pressing hard against the blast.

"I'll help you, my little fellow," said Martin. "There you are! Quite a breezy night, is n't it?"

"I should think so, — breezy!" exclaimed the boy, pleasantly excited. "It blew over the smoke-house, a little while ago."

"And it blew away my hat, and led me a wild chase across the fields," rejoined the young man, removing the handkerchief from his head.

"Could n't you find your hat?" asked the boy, with an animated face. "Say, mother! this man's hat blew away, and he can't find it! I guess father 'll lend him one, won't he?"

The question was addressed to a female who approached from an adjoining room. She was a woman scarcely forty years of age, not handsome, but with an exceedingly sweet and winning countenance, which caused Martin at once to feel at ease beneath her roof. She welcomed him hospitably, conducted him to the sitting-room, — a humble, but neat and comfortable apartment, — and listened to his story with an expression of interest and solicitude which surprised him. She even appeared quite agitated when he related how, by a seeming chance, he had been led to her house.

"You must not think of going further to-night," said she, eagerly, when he spoke of pushing on to Colonel Merrivale's. "Your uncle was better — much better — this morning, I was told. He is considered out of danger, now. So there 's nothing to prevent

your stopping here. Bring the jack, Amos, and help Mr. Merrivale take off his boots."

"Really, I can't resist this kindness!" returned Martin, overflowing with gratitude. "Thank you —" to the boy who brought the jack; "I won't trouble you any more."

"Shan't I put my foot on the toe of your boot?" asked Amos. "That 's the way I help father pull his off."

"Well, sir, I don't know but it will be an assistance. Steady, now," said Martin. "My boots draw hard, you see."

"I should think they would, there 's so much snow in 'em," cried the sympathetic Amos. "I guess you had some regular Bunker-hill banks to wallow through, did n't you?"

During the operation of drawing the boots, the woman of the house made haste to find some dry clothing for her guest, in an adjoining bed-chamber. The moment she was alone, she threw herself on her knees, beside the bed, and remained in an attitude of prayer for several minutes. Her hands were clasped, her face was buried in the bed-clothes, and her frame was shaken by a powerful emotion.

"O, God!" she murmured at length, with quivering lips, turning her streaming eyes upward, "O, Heavenly Father! I thank thee! — I thank thee!"

When, after a lapse of a few minutes, she appeared again before Martin, her eyes glistened still, but her face was radiant and happy. She brought him a pair of socks and some slippers — a humble duty, truly; but there was such sweetness and love in her countenance the while, such mellowness and softness in her voice, that he saw in the act exceeding grace and beauty; his heart was deeply touched; and as his eyes followed her, they filled with tears.

"Shan't I put some more wood in the stove?" inquired Amos. "There an't a very hot fire, I don't think."

The permission was granted, and the boy applied the fuel with the air of a person conscious of doing valuable service. In the mean time, the woman set out the table, spread a neat white cloth upon it, and made other preparations for supper, the grateful Martin still following her with his eyes.

"Why, mother, how you act!" said Amos, observing the stranger's interested gaze, and looking for the cause of it. "I guess you 're a little nervous to-night, an't you? You step around like a young girl. And you look as though you was just going to laugh, — or cry, — I don't know which."

"Hush, Amos!" she replied, in a tremulous voice.

She tried to hide her emotion; but the boy looked up wistfully in her face. She could conceal nothing even from him; what, then, must the keen-eyed traveller think? Once more she hastened to her chamber; once more, sinking on her knees, she buried her face in the bed-clothes, and gave relief to her feelings in a flood of tears. This time she remained absent longer than before. On her return to the sitting-room, she found a thin, gray-haired old man in the corner, leaning upon his staff, and watching her guest with an expression of childish curiosity.

"This is Mr. Doane, my father," said she, with a full heart, addressing Martin. She added something touching the young man's adventures; but, her voice failing her, she turned away her face, and became silent.

Martin shook hands cordially with the old man, whose pale features lighted up with pleasure.

"I have seen you somewhere, have n't I?" the latter inquired,

in the faltering accents of age. "Your countenance is familiar, I am sure. How is it, Martha?"

The woman made no reply, but, with her face still turned away, abruptly left the room.

"He looks like his uncle a good deal, I think," said Amos.

"His uncle?" queried the old man, with a perplexed look.

"Colonel Merrivale," said Martin, — "I have been told that I resemble him."

The old man's countenance changed. He dropped Martin's hand suddenly, and started back, trembling with excitement. At that moment his daughter sprang to his side, and supported his unsteady footsteps to a chair.

"Be calm, dear father!" she murmured, soothingly. "It is nothing that should trouble you. The nephew — he is not responsible for the uncle."

"But that face — it is *his* face!" exclaimed the old man, with passion.

"For Heaven's sake," pleaded the other, embracing him, "do not speak of the past! Where is your charity, father?"

"True, true!" faltered the old man. "I am quite a child, — I act very foolishly, I know. If you can forgive and forget, why should I remember?"

The cloud cleared from his brow, and a cheerful sunshine broke through, illumining his features with a light as pure and happy as that of an infant's smile.

"O, sir, think nothing of it," murmured the agitated woman regarding Martin with suffused features. "You are welcome here — heartily welcome, believe me."

Her voice became too tremulous for speech; her features were all alive and quivering with emotion; and tears, which did not

fall, shone in her eyes. Still those eyes studied the young man's face, as if she could not remove them if she would; until, her feelings overcoming her, she was forced to turn away. Martin, embarrassed, but fascinated by the strange, almost passionate look she gave him, glanced from her to the white-haired old man, with an expression of painful interest. The latter broke the silence.

"This is one of our old-fashioned storms," said he, with enthusiasm. "I don't remember such another for years. What a time they'll have breaking roads, when it's all over! There'll be a grand chance for snow-fights, too. Ha! ha!"

The old man's laughter was so very childish and airy, that it pained Martin to hear him. He had already discovered that his mind was shattered and enfeebled.

"I have understood that you used to have more violent storms, and a great deal more snow, during the winter, than we have these late years."

"Dear me, yes!" cried the old man, brightening with the reminiscence. He went on to relate incidents of old-time storms, which made Amos look wild and excited. He told of fences hidden from sight, houses buried, and men and cattle entombed in the deluging snow. "But I used to enjoy those times, though! It was sport, when we got out the shovels and the ox-teams and big sleds, breaking tracks. I should like to try that kind of sport over again, to-morrow."

Martin continued to converse with the old man, while his daughter, assisted by a girl who from time to time made her appearance from the kitchen, concluded her preparations for the evening meal.

"Amos," said she, — there was still a tremor in her voice, and

Amos and the Old Man seemed equally delighted with the novelty Martin worked out. Page 337.

the glow of a fervid emotion in her face, — "light a candle and set it in the wood-shed window. Your father must be ready to leave his work by this time, I think."

"Will he see the candle?" asked Amos. "He 's bedding-down the horses, or mixing meal for the cows, or something of that kind. He 'll come in when he gets the chores done, won't he?"

"Do as I tell you," she replied, mildly, but firmly. "He may be engaged on something which he can as well leave till morning. He told me to have a light put in the window when supper was ready."

Amos seemed inclined to argue a little on the subject; but he obeyed quite cheerfully, nevertheless; and, in a little while, — Martin at the time was washing at a sink in the kitchen, — in came a tall, straight farmer, with a bundle in his arms, and a tin lantern in his hand.

"O, father! what have you got there?" cried Amos.

"Take this lantern and put it away," replied the farmer, shutting the door with his shoulder, "and I will show you. Good-evening, sir." He nodded a welcome to Martin. "Here, father, is something that will please you."

It would be difficult to say which was the most eager to examine the contents of the bundle, old Mr. Doane or Amos.

"It 's a lamb that has made its appearance in this stormy world a little out of season," said the farmer, opening the bundle on the kitchen hearth.

Amos and the old man seemed equally delighted with the novelty. Martin looked on with interest.

"What will you do with it?" he inquired. "Can it be made to live?'

"I think so, if proper care is taken of it?" replied the farmer. "Warm a little milk for it, Jane, to begin with. I 'll make you a present of it, Amos, if you will see that it is fed and kept warm."

"I 've saved more than one lamb in my day," laughed the old man, bending over the hearth. "I remember one pet I had that learned to butt, and finally got to knocking people over, the little rogue! Let me show you how to feed it, Amos."

The same childishness that had so pained Martin at first. But it was more affecting now to see the feeble old man, imagining himself a boy again, get down with difficulty on the hearth, laughing with quiet glee, and vie with Amos in his attentions to the lamb.

Meanwhile his daughter called to the last comer from the other room. The farmer said he would wash himself first, then wait on her immediately; and presently he entered the sitting-room, rolling down his sleeves.

"O, Jared!" she articulated, clasping his hand; "I have so much to say to you! I could scarcely refrain from running out to the barn through the storm to find you. Come!"

The farmer looked surprised, and followed her — rather deliberately, considering how eager she was — into the bed-chamber beyond. Martin, returning from the kitchen, observed, from the doorway, this little scene, and asked himself, with some perplexity of thought, if all this excitement and mystery had any connection personally with himself.

It was many minutes before Jared and his companion reäppeared, and Martin sat alone by the stove the while, pondering over his adventure, and glancing in thought at his uncle, whom he expected to see in the morning, and at Alice and Sophronia

far away. At length the two came out together, and the woman — somewhat to the surprise of her guest — introduced the farmer as her brother.

"I see you are a little puzzled," observed Jared, after she had withdrawn to the kitchen.

"A little, I confess," returned Martin, blushing. "I have only my own stupidity to blame, however."

"You had looked upon Martha and me as man and wife," said Jared, smiling. "A natural mistake. But we are only brother and sister, as you see. And this old man — " he lowered his voice, and spoke in a very tender and touching tone — "is our father. We three live together here; I am an old bachelor, and they are company enough for me."

"Your sister, then, is a widow."

"O, no."

"Her husband is still living, then?"

"No," said Jared; "she has never been married."

Martin blushed more deeply than ever. The farmer perceived his difficulty, and made haste to help him out of it.

"You are thinking of Amos. He calls us father and mother, — but it is only because we occupy the place of parents to him. He is a boy we have taken to bring up."

After these explanations, Martin and Jared entered into a conversation on topics of general interest. The farmer was intelligent, sympathetic, and whole-souled; his honest, unaffected manner commanded Martin's admiration, and won his confidence; and he appeared not less pleased with his guest's generous sentiments and ingenuous behavior.

The supper, which was presently announced, was a cheerful meal, at which the whole family attended, Jane, the hired girl,

not excepted. True, Amos was so frequently obliged to leave his dish of bread and milk, in order to pay visits to the poor lamb, that sent up its piteous little bleat, from time to time, from the kitchen hearth, that he could scarcely be said to have taken supper. He made his transits like a benevolent pendulum, or philanthropic shuttle. But, if he ate little, she whom he called mother ate still less. She seemed to give her whole attention to her guest, listening with tears and smiles to his conversation, to the neglect of her appetite, — if she had any.

Jared was calm and happy. His treatment of his guest was easy and familiar, without lacking the element of dignity. His talk was manly; it was like choice wine, with the sparkle of true humor in its flow.

At the same time the old man refrained not from speech; the son always deferring to his childish prattle with a tenderness and sympathy exceedingly beautiful to witness.

The supper itself was a very simple meal, consisting of rich milk, fresh, yellow butter, and white, light bread, with excellent apple-sauce and sponge-cake. Besides, there was fragrant tea for old Mr. Doane, — of which his daughter also took a cup, — and some nice slices of fried ham, cooked, as it appeared, expressly for Martin. The company remained a good while at table, — always excepting Amos, the lamb-doctor, — Jared himself, who was a slow eater as well as a persevering talker, setting the example. Jane was the first to leave, adjourning to the kitchen. The old man followed soon, with a view to affording aid and counsel to Amos in the affair of nursing the lamb.

"We shall miss Junius this evening, Martha," observed Jared, at length, shoving back his chair. "We will not complain, however, Providence has furnished us with so good a substitute."

"O, but I wish Junius would come in!" exclaimed Martha, in a tone of deep earnestness. "He and — and Mr. Merrivale," she faltered, — "it seems as though they should be acquainted."

"We are speaking of a young friend — a favorite of ours," added Mr. Doane. "He is the son of our minister, and a near neighbor. Scarce an evening passes that we do not see him, if only for a few minutes. Martha wishes he would come in to-night; but I am afraid you would be disappointed in him. If the caprice should strike him, he would have no scruples at all about remaining silent as a mute, from the time he entered the door until he took his departure."

"His sociability depends upon the persons he meets," Martha hastened to say. "If one does not please him, he pays no compliments; he is polite, but strikingly taciturn. It is not because he cannot talk; but he prefers to pass for a fool, rather than enter into forced and commonplace conversation with people he has no sympathy with."

"The truth is, Junius so detests anything like a falsehood or a sham, that he would starve, I think, sooner than coin words or smiles merely to please everybody. But it is useless to attempt to give you a satisfactory picture of him. I should like to have you see him, for my own selfish gratification," said Jared, laughing. "It would be as interesting as the observation of a rare chemical experiment, —bringing into contact two unique elements, to mark their affinity."

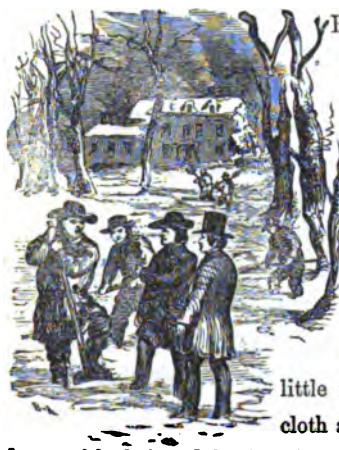
The farmer had an errand to the barn, after rising from the supper-table; Jane was engaged with the dishes, and old Mr. Doane and Amos with the lamb. Thus Martin was left alone with Martha, whose heart seemed full of the warmest interest in his behalf, — so much so, that she could not converse with him

without visible emotion. They spoke again of the minister's son; that topic leading to the more general one of the world, which suggested something of Martin's own experience in Boston and elsewhere; a tissue of discourse beginning with Junius, and ending with Martin himself — a sort of interlocutory suspension-bridge, on whose wires of thought Martha passed over, from one to the other, with exceeding eagerness. She was thoughtful of her guest, however. She took care not to weary him with too many questions, notwithstanding the keen interest she took in all he had to say. Martha was merciful, — would more women were so! — and not long after Jared's return from the barn, Martin, who really needed repose, as any one could see, was sent up stairs to bed.

Not on an empty stomach, as the phrase is; his supper had been too recent for that. It would have been better for his dreams, perhaps, had he given digestion a little better chance before retiring. He might have been saved that horrible phantasm of attempting to fly (using Miss Tomes' bonnet for a wing) against a tempestuous snow-storm; of being blown off upon a bleak mountain-side, which changed suddenly to a sea of bread and milk; and of swimming, under great difficulties, to overtake Amos, who was dashing away before a spanking breeze, in the yacht Junius, with a colossal wooden spoon for a sail.

XXIII.

THE MORNING AFTER.



WHEN Martin awoke, the light of day was streaming through the windows of his quiet chamber. He started up in some surprise, not knowing at first where he was; but presently recollection dawned upon him. He remembered the antique bureau, with its many drawers and quaint brass handles; the little round stand, with a neat white cloth and a big Bible upon it; the windows, with their old-fashioned sashes and white curtains; the rag-carpet, blue chairs, and biblical pictures which set off the floor and the walls, — all which he had observed the night before. At the same time, his adventure, with all its dependent circumstances, rushed like a flood upon his memory, and he was broad awake in an instant.

On arising, Martin found a bowl and pitcher of water, covered with towels, at his chamber-door. Some careful hand had set

them in there that morning, without disturbing his slumber; he seemed to recognize Martha in the act, and thanked her for it. He conveyed the apparatus to one of the blue chairs; but, before washing, curiosity impelled him to look out of the window. The storm was over; the fury of the tempest was spent; only now and then could the sighing wind be heard wandering about the house; and the scene without was peacefully picturesque. The sky was cloudy, and the daylight was white and cold. Everywhere the effects of the storm were apparent, from the fantastic carved-work of snow which festooned the windows, to the drifts which rolled up, smooth and beautiful, with exquisite delicacy of curves, in every spot sheltered from the broad sweep of the storm. Martin saw the tall Jared shovelling a path through hard embankments to the barn, — an exhilarating sight, which made the farmer's life look romantic and attractive in his eyes.

On going down stairs, Martin found his hostess engaged in preparing breakfast. Her countenance lighted up at sight of him, and she hastened to inquire how he had passed the night. The same goodness of face, and the same exquisite mellowness of voice, awakened the sympathies of her guest; for the impression came to him now, with singular clearness and force, that she was one whose nature, through much suffering, had been thus purified and softened.

"What a pleasant location you have here!" said he, enjoying a view from the front windows for the first time. "In summer these trees must set off your house finely. You are on a more elevated spot than I had any idea of, last night. I like those hills and woods."

"O, yes; I think we are in a delightful spot," returned Martha. "I should be laughed at, if I told how much I am

attached to it. Yet you see our house is not much to boast of. It is an old-fashioned, weather-beaten thing; but I don't know but we are as happy in it as we should be in a much-finer one At all events, we are quite contented here."

"Well you might be!" cried Martin, heartily.

"Would you be contented in so humble a home?"

"More than contented!"

"Leaving all your ambition — your love of the world — behind you?"

"I don't know," said Martin, with a smile, and a shake of the head. "Every day I feel how false and unsatisfactory this world-worship is; but there is a fascination in it."

"I know there is — to one so young as you, especially," returned Martha, with earnest feeling. "But, O, there is a peace that passeth understanding! If you could feel that!"

"I have had glimpses of it. In my better moments I have seen the awful beauty of the soul; I have been ravished by it; I have said, Give me this, and take away all things else; give mo this, with poverty and mean raiment, and take away all things less bright and pure. At such times I feel that I stand upon the eternal Rock. The waves of worldly strife roll beneath me. How turgid they look! I breathe the mountain airs of joy and peace. But the first returning tide sweeps me from my foothold, and I struggle in the great deep."

"There is hope for you yet!" exclaimed Martha, quite overpowered by her emotions. "Seek that Rock again; seek it continually, and you will soon be able to stand there, and brave the waters."

She wept freely, but her face shone bright and happy through her tears.

"I am so glad to hear you speak so!" she went on, after a pause. "Some things you said last night made me fear for you. I thought you did not reverence religion as you ought; yet I remember, it was only the counterfeit you spoke slightingly of. But the thing itself — the religious principle — I know you reverence that."

"More than everything else," added Martin, fervently; "and the great Representative of that principle, — my reverence for Him makes the heroes and philosophers of history shrink into insignificance."

Martha could not suppress the joy the hearty expression of this sentiment stirred within her breast. But the entrance of Jared about this time diverted the conversation to other subjects.

"I saw you shovelling snow," said Martin, "and thought perhaps you were hunting for my hat, which is supposed to be buried somewhere in this region. My conscience told me that I ought to assist you; in fact, I was about going to offer my services."

"If you would like a little exercise before breakfast, I can lend you a hat until yours comes to light," cried the farmer.

Martin said that he would like nothing better, and, a hat being found to fit him, he went out with Jared. The latter could afford him no time to shovel snow, however. He wanted to show him his premises, which had a very interesting and picturesque appearance that morning. All around the barn and sheds lay the drifts; and the patient sheep, huddled under their shelter, appeared to look out with quiet wonder upon the effects of the storm. The farmer, at his approach, was greeted with peaceful bleats, and one or two ambitious animals attempted to climb the steep banks, as if to remind him that their race still existed, and depended upon his bounty for fodder. The hens seemed equally

loth to leave the shed. They hopped about on the mangers, the roosts, and the backs of the sheep, until, the barn-door being thrown open, and a few handfuls of corn scattered on the floor, they flew in, one by one, cackling, and began to pick and scratch and cluck, industriously. After this, Mr. Doane went up by a ladder into a loft over the shed, and threw down fodder for the sheep. He then cleared the snow away from a watering-trough in the yard, chopped open the ice, primed the pump with water Amos brought out in the milking-pail, and led out the horses to drink. The novelty and beauty of these scenes Martin enjoyed much. He assisted in foddering the sheep, feeding the hens, and watering the horses; but Amos would not let him milk either of the cows in the stable, — wisely warning him that, if he wasn't used to it, he would spatter himself all over, and spoil his clothes.

Martha's breakfast was late that morning, and her guest was blessed with an excellent appetite by the time it was ready. The whole family sat down together, as on the night before; Jared said grace, and the meal passed very pleasantly. They were still at table, when the door was suddenly burst open, and in walked a figure covered from head to foot with snow.

"Junius!" exclaimed Martha, arising.

"Don't get up," cried the young man. "I can help myself to a seat."

"Have you been to breakfast?" asked Mr. Jared.

"I hope so, at this time of day!" replied Junius, shaking his cap. "I believe I 've seen some snow-drifts between here and the parson's," he added, regarding himself with pleasant humor. "If you 'll come out and sweep me, Amos, I 'll do as much for you, some time."

The operation of sweeping was performed, and Junius, return-

ing to the sitting-room, was introduced to "Mr. Merrivale." The young men shook hands, looking each other full in the eye. Martha watched them with interest, studying the deep expression of Junius' face with especial solicitude, as if anxious to know how he liked her guest.

"Now talk, young fellows, — talk," cried Jared, gayly. "Here 's Mr. Merrivale, an ambitious youth from the city, and Mr. Murray, a contemplative country boy, — you should make a good team for a little while, it seems to me. Come — compare notes; measure your experiences; see how your philosophies agree."

Martin blushed, and told Mr. Doane that he had adopted the best means he could think of for shutting his mouth.

"What shall we talk about?" asked Junius. "Shall I tell Mr. Merrivale how many fools we have to one sensible person in our parish? Shall I inform him how very pious we are in all the externals of religion, and how faint and few are the genuine sparks of faith among us? Shall I let him into the secrets of our village gossip, and tell him what matches have been recently made, what broken off, and what are still in a nebulous state of formation? In return, I suppose he could warn me that the town is artificial and false, — that it exults in shows and shams, — but which of us would be the wiser when we were done talking? Human nature is the same everywhere, and we know enough of the mere facts of human nature already. But, if Mr. Merrivale has a thought which will help me to solve this riddle of life, then talking will be worth while. I would take forty tramps through the snow for such an object. Or, if I have any little ray to shed upon his soul, so much the better. It is good to receive; but it is a thousand times better to give."

"And true souls may both give and receive in silence," replied Martin. "Much is often said when no word is spoken."

"Good!" exclaimed Junius. His clear features and deep hazel eyes radiated the thoughts which streamed in upon him. "I am glad you think so, for it is true. Then let us be contented to sit still, when no language comes uppermost. True words are like sparks from the anvil of our souls. There is a time to heat the iron as well as to beat it, — a silent operation that, accompanied with much blowing of the bellows;" and Junius expanded his lungs by way of illustration.

"You do not disdain a pun, I see," said Martin.

"O, but I am no punster!" cried the parson's son. "Martha will tell you that; Jared, too, will bear witness; and grandfather, here, will add his testimony."

Old Mr. Doane, who sat listening to the conversation with childish attention and delight, declared, unconditionally, that he had never known either Junius or the parson, his father, to be guilty of a pun.

"Not a decided pun, perhaps," added Martha, with quiet humor; "but both are ingenious in finding odd analogies between things spiritual and temporal."

"Ingenious? It requires no ingenuity to find such analogies. Only open your eyes and you will see them," said Junius, "for they exist. Things correspond to thoughts universally, — so beautifully that I often think they have no other substantial use."

The ship of conversation, thus set afloat, sailed finely. Martin and Junius steered out boldly on the broad ocean of thought; nor did Mr. Jared and Martha fail to keep in speaking distance. At length Martin took an observation, — in plain words, looked at the clock, — and suddenly put his helm hard aport. He felt

the necessity of making his way through the drifts to his uncle's house thus early, in order to return to Boston, if possible, that night. Both Martha and Jared counselled him earnestly to wait till after dinner, when the latter promised to take him over in his sleigh.

"There are no tracks broken yet, and you will find the trip no slight undertaking," insisted Mr. Doane.

"You need not be alarmed," said Junius. "I will act as his pilot. We will go up to Summer Hill right merrily, over the fences and through the drifts. What do you say, Mr. Merrivale?"

Martin could have desired no better arrangement. It was a great relief to think of mitigating the awkwardness of his visit by an introduction. Accordingly, having promised to call on the Doanes again before he returned to Boston, he took leave of them, and set out with his new friend for Summer Hill.

"I have not yet been able to learn what my uncle's malady is," Martin said to his companion, as they tramped across the fields. "There seems to be some mystery about it."

"Mystery there certainly is," replied Junius. "One day the colonel was among us, strong and hearty as ever, full of business, full of life; and the next morning the news spread through the town that he was dying — that he was dead. Some said a shock of apoplexy had destroyed him. Others held to the belief that he had fallen from his horse, — that he had been kicked; others, that he had been assailed by a robber, who had perforated him with wounds. Nobody knew anything definite about it, however. Dr. Pinworth, the family physician, was called; but he was considered unequal to the emergency, and straightway a surgeon was sent for from a neighboring town. My father, the parson, had

been summoned during the night; also, I think, the colonel's lawyer was consulted. But all beyond this favored circle — the family, of course, excepted — were in the dark."

"But the Doanes told me you were intimate with the family; you should know something definite concerning the tragedy."

"Perhaps I know as much as any one. But not even the parson, my father, has penetrated to the heart of the mystery. I can tell you, however, that the colonel has had no apoplexy; that he has neither been flung from his horse, nor kicked, nor robbed."

"Nor poisoned?"

"Nor poisoned. Yet — I may as well tell you this in advance, for it will be kept no secret from you — he has been assailed and stabbed — stabbed in a dozen places, — literally cut to pieces, as the phrase is. To avoid scandal, as much as anything, but professedly to trace out the assailant with as little ado as possible, the affair has been shrouded in mystery."

"And the assailant has not yet been discovered?"

"Not yet; nor do I see any progress made towards that end. Perhaps the colonel knows his enemy, although he will not confess that he does. He was suddenly set upon in the dark, near his own door, — first knocked senseless, as it appears, then chopped and whittled with a murderous instrument, of the dagger family, afterwards found on the spot, and left, apparently, for dead."

"He was found in that state?"

"Yes, — by Mr. Milburn."

"Mr. Milburn!" exclaimed Martin.

"I should have spoken of him before," Junius went on, seating himself on the top of a wall, to which he had climbed, over the drifts. "I included him in the family when I mentioned those

who were in the secret. He is, in fact, engaged — to use the vulgar expression — to your most charming and delectable cousin Louise."

"Go on," said Martin, agitated; "I am dying to know all about this matter."

"You will die, then, for all me," laughed Junius; "for I have told you nearly all I have to tell. This Mr. Milburn — he had come out in the evening train from Boston. The stage left him, as he states, at the foot of the colonel's avenue, and, as he walked up the hill, he saw a dark figure flit past him. He thought nothing of it, until, approaching the house, he discovered the colonel in his blood."

"I wonder that the whole neighborhood were not instantly alarmed."

"Yes, — but Theodore Milburn is not one of your excitable and indiscreet gentlemen. He was cool and decided. He said, "Confusion and notoriety must be avoided. Call in your physician with the utmost secrecy and despatch." He himself was swift and silent in action; and it is owing to his exertions, probably, that the colonel's life was saved."

The young men had by this time come in sight of Summer Hill, — which, as the reader will readily suppose, looked wintry enough, that morning, to deserve a somewhat different name. It seemed half a mile off, — white with snow, and still and cold as an iceberg. The smoke from the chimneys trailing off over the plain was the only visible sign of life up there among the dead-looking trees. On a nearer approach, the young men discovered laborers shovelling snow at the foot of the avenue. Having reached the scene of their operations, and stopped a moment to inquire how the colonel was, they went up by the path which had

already been made, communicating between the mansion and the road.

The visitors were shown into a comfortable little family parlor, where there was a pleasant wood-fire blazing on the hearth. They were left alone for some minutes; and the anxious Martin endeavored to divert his mind from the doubts and misgivings so natural to his situation, by inspecting the volumes of an elegant book-case in the corner.

Junius sat drying his feet by the fire, when suddenly a graceful girl of eighteen entered, almost noiselessly, and took him playfully by the ear.

"Nobody but you, is it?" she cried, her handsome features lighting up, as she made that pleasant demonstration of friendship.

"Nobody but me? I am of no consequence, then; and my ear — that is of no consequence, either! Leave it with me, however, if you please."

"O, excuse me!" The young lady patted the abused ear compassionately, and carefully covered it with her visitor's long, dark curls — pulling them, of course, during the operation. "I thought, from what Maria said, that a stranger had come. I should n't have stopped to fix my hair for you."

"Were you expecting anybody?"

"Why, yes; it seems so. The stage-driver sent up a valise last night, which he said belonged to a passenger who was to have been left here. But the passenger had gone to chase his hat across the country, and nobody knew what had become of him."

"And you haven't seen or heard of him yet?"

"No; is n't it singular?"

"But you must have been alarmed."

"I was, at first," replied Louise, seating herself in a rocking-chair, with her back towards Martin. "For, of course, the first person I thought of was Mr. Milburn. But he would n't be so silly as to chase his hat in a storm such as we had last night!"

Junius glanced pleasantly at Martin, who, from being quite pale with excitement, colored to the roots of his hair.

"Then again," Louise went on, "there were the initials 'M. M.' on the valise — not T. M. What it can all mean, I don't know. The affair has worried father exceedingly. I think he scarcely slept at all, last night. And this morning he has directed that inquiries and search should be made for the young man who has gone off in chase of his hat. You need not laugh," said Louise, laughing herself the while. "It is a very serious affair. It seems very comical, though; and I'm burning with curiosity to see the owner of the mysterious valise."

"Shall I draw his portrait for you?"

"Have you seen him?"

"It is not always necessary to see a person, to form an idea how he looks, — is it?" asked Junius.

"I remember you described Mr. Milburn to me, before you ever saw him, and told me more about his disposition than I knew myself, — or thought you did, at least; but, of course, I was n't foolish enough to believe you."

"Very well; you 'll find out, one of these days. When I came to see Mr. Milburn, I was confirmed in my opinion. You have n't seen him yet."

"I have n't!" Louise laughed incredulously. But the searching eye of Junius was upon her, and suddenly her countenance changed. A shadow clouded her fair brow, and she bit her lip with impatience. "Perhaps you are right," she added, in a low,

unquiet tone. "But it can't be helped now. My fate is decided — and I am glad of it. I hope I shall have some peace from mother's persecutions."

"We 'll leave that subject for the present, if you please," said Junius. "I described Mr. Milburn from one or two hints you threw out concerning him; his whole image arose before me. Now, let me see what I can make of the young man who chases his hat over an unknown region of country in such a storm as that of last night. I see him before me."

The speaker looked directly over Louise's shoulder at Martin, who stood a perfect picture of embarrassment and surprise, and began his description, — which was not a very flattering one to the subject in some particulars, yet strikingly correct. When he came to traits of character, he astonished Martin by his wonderful power of reading human nature. Some of our hero's most intimate thoughts and feelings were brought to light, and displayed before the eyes of the interested but unbelieving Louise.

"I 'd like to know what all that amounts to," she said, when the portrait was finished. "If I could only imagine there was anything in it! At any rate, I 'd give a good deal to see such a person as you describe. It 's a splendid portrait!"

"Just look behind you, then, and compare it with the original," replied Junius, with a quiet smile.

Louise turned, glancing carelessly over her shoulder, and uttered a faint scream.

"Shall I have the pleasure of introducing the owner of the valise, 'M. M.' — the gentleman who was so silly as to chase his hat some furlongs out into chaos, — the original of the portrait I have just had the honor to draw?"

Louise had covered her face from sight; but Junius took her

hand, and, after a brief struggle, she arose, red-blushing, and smiled on the stranger. But the next moment she turned upon the parson's son, shook her beautiful head menacingly, and, still red and smiling, declared that she would never forgive him. Her full form and exquisitely rounded features, together with her charm of manner and expression, produced an electric effect on Martin. His heart fluttered; in his cheek the blood ebbed and flowed tumultuously; he stood transfixed before his lovely cousin.

Louise received an additional shock of surprise when informed who Martin was. But it was an agreeable shock. She had heard of such a cousin; she had longed and longed, she said, to see him; and now she could give him her hand with a hearty welcome to Summer Hill.

Martin, elate with joy, took the hand, and a kiss with it. His own audacity frightened him; but the fair Louise was too much enraptured with her new-found cousin to be at all disturbed.

The two were soon on excellent terms with each other, and the conversation became spirited. Junius was a silent observer. Martin was giving a humorous account of his adventures between Boston and Summer Hill, when a fourth person — a tall, fine-looking woman — entered the room.

The enthusiastic Louise hastened to introduce her mother. But her mother did not appear quite so enthusiastic on the occasion. She was courteous, but cold. The hand she gave to Martin was as ice. He felt it, and was chilled. And the strange expression which flashed into her face with the surprise of the meeting — it had not gone unobserved. There was hatred and jealousy, and a mighty towering up of pride and will, in that look; and, swiftly as it was quelled, it left a lasting impression on her guest.

Conversation was frozen. Louise looked angrily at her mother,

and bit her lips, while the hot blood mantled on her brow. The impassive face of Junius became as marble. He opened not his mouth from that time forward. He seemed scarce conscious where he was; yet those deep, dark eyes of his searched the souls of the actors in that little drama, and saw far into the machinery of the play.

Martin forced his way through the barrier of reserve his aunt's spirit threw up before him, — it was worse than breaking through snow-drifts, — and inquired about his uncle. Her answer was not wanting in politeness; and she offered to carry the news of his arrival to the sick chamber, and learn when a visit from him would be agreeable to the invalid. Martin thanked her, and she withdrew.

Colonel Merrivale was sitting up in bed, reading his favorite political paper, when his wife entered the room. At the opening of the door, he turned his head with visible eagerness; but, perceiving who the comer was, he resumed his reading with an expression of countenance not remarkably flattering to her presence.

"I have good news for you," she said, with cutting sarcasm. "The person whose valise came here last night —"

She paused. The colonel started, lowered his newspaper, and gave her his attention.

"You knew who it was, it seems," she resumed. "There was reason for your anxiety. Your feelings were natural and commendable."

Mrs. Merrivale spoke with forced calmness. But her self-control was not perfect; passion was fast getting the mastery, and her voice trembled.

"You can spare your comments," said the colonel, turning his

white face upon her with a look full of something quite the opposite of conjugal tenderness. "I do not wish to hear them."

"But hear them you shall!" burst forth the lady, sweeping across the room, and standing proudly erect before his bed. Her blue eyes shot forth rays of red light; her face, so fair at forty, put on dark defiance like a veil; and in her lofty gestures there was determination and power. "This insult is too much. You sent for that young man, or he would not be here."

"I sent for him, it is true," muttered the invalid. "Shall I apologize? My excuse is a fair one, madam. Will you exercise a little of your exemplary Christian charity and patience, and listen to it? Or shall I be silent?"

"If there can be any excuse for breaking a solemn oath, — if there is any apology for dishonor, — let me hear it."

Colonel Merrivale's white face bleached out whiter still, and his brow knotted up with anger. He appeared to be choked, for it was near a minute before his voice could be heard.

"All oaths that ever bound us together were broken so long ago, that I supposed I might, in an emergency, be free to act," he said, at length. "The oath I made was on condition that you should be my wife. My wife! If you ever were, hatred divorced us, years ago."

"And whose fault was it? I never had your heart. Another had it, and consumed it, and you brought me the ashes! Nothing but pride ever led you to ask my hand."

"No more! I plead guilty to the charge. I have sinned — and I repent."

The veins swelled upon the lady's forehead as if they would burst. The colonel, weak as he was, appeared stronger than she.

"Excuse me for using plain language," he said, severely, whilst she was struggling to speak. "When steel strikes flint, there are sparks. I am sorry you forced the words from me; for our marriage is a subject it were better never to broach. Let us leave it where it is. Now for my apology. I lay on my death-bed, as I supposed. Was it unpardonable that I should desire to see that luckless boy? Mr. Murray, your minister, whom you so much reverence and admire — he told me it was my duty to see him. So I thought the case was clear. A letter was written under his directions, calling the boy to my bed-side. I cannot guess what has occasioned his delay; but, since he has arrived, — as I suppose he has, — I think I will not let him go away without seeing him."

The colonel coolly reached forth and rang a bell that stood upon the table at his bed-side. An attendant appeared.

"My nephew, Mr. Merrivale, — he is below. Show him up."

Somewhat pale, and with a tremor of apprehension in his nerves, Martin appeared, and advanced to his uncle's bedside. At sight of that white face, and the kindly smile it wore, his heart became quite softened, and he greeted the invalid not without glistening eyes.

"I 'm in rather a helpless condition, it is true," said the colonel, in answer to his expression of regret at finding him in such a state. "But there has been a decided improvement in my case during the past two days. Until yesterday, my head troubled me strangely. I had fainting-fits nearly every hour, — in consequence of injuries received in my stomach. Have you heard about the catastrophe that brought me here?"

"Mr. Murray told me something of it, as we came over from Mr. Doane's."

"From Mr. Doane's?"

"Yes, sir, — where I passed the night. I have had a strange adventure, sir! Had it not been for the hospitality of Miss Doane —"

The young man was checked in the midst of his sentence by an alarming change in the colonel. The latter had suddenly fallen forward with his head upon his breast, like a dying man. Martin hastened to support him.

"Don't be alarmed," said Mrs. Merrivale, bathing her husband's brow, with perfect composure. "This is nothing uncommon."

The colonel recovered presently, and, opening his eyes, looked up with a faint smile at Martin, from his pillow.

"Another of those horrible fainting-fits! I hoped I had experienced the last of them," he said, in a feeble voice. "Some drink!"

Mrs. Merrivale helped the colonel to a glass of water, then abruptly left the room. He followed her with his eyes, and smiled again as the door closed behind her.

"You understand now why I never brought you here before," said he, drawing Martin towards him.

Intelligent and sympathetic, Martin gave his uncle's hand a warm pressure. Then ensued a long and confidential talk. Confidential on one side, at least; for the young man, betrayed by his feelings, and quite thrown off his guard, was ready to open his heart, and yield everything, for the moment, to the pale and helpless invalid. As for the latter, he was less confidential than diplomatic; his heart overflowed with kindness, promises and excuses — a fruitful source of perplexity to poor, dissatisfied Martin.

Fire came into Louise Merrivale's eyes and cheeks as her mother reëntered the room, and her small foot drummed impatiently upon the rug.

"What is the trouble now?" asked the irritated woman.

"I shall be glad when I am married!" exclaimed Louise.

"You will not be the only one glad!" replied the mother, with a sarcastic curl of the lip.

"You are the worst woman I ever saw!" Louise went on, rocking far back in her chair. "I don't believe any one else could be so hateful, without trying hard; but it comes natural to you."

"I am used to such talk as this!" said her mother, bitterly. "It does not trouble me much. But I am ashamed that Junius should hear you."

"He has heard me before. He knows how bad I am, — and there is no use trying to hide my faults. He knows what makes me so, too. Your disposition is enough to spoil an angel. If I like a person, you are sure to dislike him. You are the most jealous woman that ever lived. You used to think Mr. Milburn was a saint, — you kept sounding his praises in my ear till I was sick of hearing his name, — but, the moment I consented to have him, you turned right around, and began to sneer and be sarcastic whenever he was spoken of. You are afraid I will love somebody better than I love you! Merely because I showed myself pleased with Cousin Martin, just now, you had to put on one of your hateful ways. There!" exclaimed Louise, spitefully, throwing down a book she had taken up, "I have said all I am going to. I can't begin to express my feelings. I shall go distracted, if I try."

It was a wonder how Mrs. Merrivale could endure her daugh-

ter's speech and conduct as she did. But, jealous and self-willed as she was, her love for that beautiful but perverse child was the ruling passion of her heart. And perhaps she was self-convicted of the charge brought against her; perhaps she saw how, with her own hand, actuated by some such blind and selfish love as the wild beast feels for its young, she had poisoned her daughter's nature. So, with only a few chiding words, let fall like drops of rain from a thunder-cloud, she passed out of the room, leaving the atmosphere oppressed and sultry behind her, as when the summer-storm moves sullenly down the sky without breaking.

Then Junius took the hand of Louise, and talked to her as no mortal had ever talked to her before. He told her of her faults freely and plainly; but he also told her that she had a soul superior to them all, as the sunlight is superior to clouds. He breathed into her ear whisperings of that sweet peace which springs from patience, long-suffering and charity. He painted a picture of the spirit's bright progression; portrayed the loveliness of that life into which the Christian graces flow; streamed into her mind a light by which the dark deformities of her temper looked hideous.

"I am a wicked, ugly creature, and I know it!" she exclaimed. "I wonder that you can bear to come near me."

"Ah, Louise!" said Junius, with deep tenderness, "you don't know how I love you — how my soul loves your soul! O, if you would but come out from among the rocks and briers! Death stands between us now, — that spiritual death which is colder and darker than the grave. Come out, — come out into the light of life; leave your falsities behind you; put on the white raiment of purity and truth. If, in the midst of all the trials and temptations which surround you, you would but stand erect — "

"Nonsense!" exclaimed Louise, flinging his hand from her, and bursting into a scornful laugh.

The conduct of that perverse creature seemed incomprehensible. It was plain that she loved Junius; her mother knew it; he was not ignorant of the fact. He loved her, too, as he had a hundred times, half-playfully, yet all in earnest, declared. Yet he took his stand so nobly upon the mountain-peaks of truth, and said to her, so serenely, "Come up hither!" that, blind to the high moral principle which was his motive and his strength, she felt a wilful pride in answering him with mockery. And now, before she was aware how much she yielded to him, she had become completely softened under his influence. A moment more, and a crisis might have been passed for which she would have rejoiced in all future years; but sudden shame surprised her, and she flung back his hand, and laughed him to scorn, as we have seen.

Grieved at the heart, Junius arose and walked the room. Poor Louise would have given much to draw him back. Already she bitterly regretted the hasty word which repelled him from her; she even made an effort to recall it, — but pride laid its finger on her lips and sealed them. And so the gulf between her and Junius, which had been so nearly overpassed, looked wider and deeper from that day.

The shadow that swept over the young man's spirit quickly passed. The expression of his fine features became serene, as once more he approached Louise. She trembled with expectancy. A ray of hope, all faint and quivering, stole down into the troubled waters of her soul.

"Where is John, this morning?" he asked. "Does he know I am here? I should like to see him."

The ray was extinguished in gloom. A chill fell upon the heart of Louise.

"I will speak to him," she replied, coldly.

She arose and left the room. Junius smiled sadly. Well he knew how wretched, how utterly desolate, her feelings were; and mayhap he was not sorry that it was so.

He was pacing to and fro in contemplative mood when John — a younger brother of Louise — entered the apartment. John was a pale, consumptive boy; disease had eaten his flesh and drank his blood; yet at sight of Junius his step became elastic, and his attenuated face flushed with a glow of pleasure.

"I am so glad to see you!" said he, with glistening eyes. "I am only sorry that Margaret did not come with you. I miss you so much."

"You have been a little low-spirited, I see," returned Junius, pressing his thin, cold hand.

"Yes, I have. I am not often so — but sometimes I can't help it." John's voice was tremulous, and his eyes filled. "I know I ought to be cheerful — but — "

"I understand you," said Junius, taking him to his heart, as if he had been some sweet sister, just fitted for the angel world. "It would be a miracle if you did not suffer sometimes. Yet there is a consolation and a hope!"

"I feel it," replied John, fervently. "I am willing to go. I am sure that death is but a bright continuation of life. The grave is only a place where we leave our masks and veils; and I am ready to leave mine. But clouds of doubt will come!"

"If the soul had nothing to struggle against, where would it

ever get its strength? Ah, John! the strongest, purest spirit is that which has suffered most, and triumphed over greatest temptations."

"That is true. As you said the other day, every birth is attended with pain, — even the birth of the spirit into new truths."

"Yet what an ecstasy follows the birth!" said Junius, his countenance shining with a fine enthusiasm. "But we must never stop. Progression is infinite. Every day and every hour we must be born into newer and higher spiritual life, to be true children of God. To pause, is to wither and decay. To-day I would be dead to all the sins of yesterday; to-morrow I would wash my hands from all the impurities of to-day; and so on, forever. Up, up, continually, is the word, my brother!"

Poor John, inspired with an ineffable joy of spirit, wept on the bosom of his friend.

"I should be happier if anybody understood me here," he said, at length. "They still try to make me think I shall get well. Father talks to me about the future and ambition. He means well; but what he says grates very harshly. I do not like to disappoint him, but I know I shall. He will have no son to inherit his wealth and position — no John Merrivale will go to Congress in this generation!" added the boy, with the saddest smile. "I wish he would give up these things — as I did, long ago."

"He has many things to give up, which will wrench his soul at parting," returned Junius. "But all will yet be well."

"And mother, — I grieve for her," murmured John. "I am almost sorry she belongs to the church; I am afraid she puts too much confidence in the material facts of communion and baptism. Of the real communion, of the baptism in love and truth, she

knows but very little. She, too, tries to divert me with worldly trifles — with vain expectations of health and pleasure. She is unwilling that any one should talk to me about dying."

"Do you know," answered Junius, with fervor, "that you may become an instrument for softening her nature — for infusing the fire of spirit into her heart? When she sees you go with a holy light in your countenance, something shall whisper in her soul, 'The true life! — the true life! Seek it out!'"

"O, I pray that it may be so! It would be such a glorious change for her — and for Louise. How sad it is to see my poor sister growing up into the same unhappy spirit, under her influence! I wish you would talk to her as you talk to me. You have done me *so much* good! I feel as if you had delivered me from death. If you could do the same for her!"

"She is not where you are, dear John. *She* walks proud and strong in the dark path. But Death has approached very gently, and loosened your hold from the idols of this world."

"I am thankful for it," said John, weeping peacefully. "I am happy in the thought. My eyes have been turned upward, and I see a glorious light, which I might not have seen had I gone on rejoicing in the mere sensuous life I had. I feel that death is kindly."

Mrs. Merrivale entered in time to overhear this last remark, and find John still in tears. Her brow darkened, and she drew her son sternly from his friend's embrace.

"You know this does not please me," she said, in a low, rapid tone of voice. "It has a bad effect on John to talk about such things."

"You know, mother," John interposed, "these talks with Junius are my greatest consolation."

"They make you gloomy and low-spirited. You think too much about dying. You never will get well in this way. Life is what you should think about. Junius, why can't you tell him something to cheer him, to give him hope and strength?"

"I give him such hope and strength as I think he needs most," replied Junius.

"O, mother, he fills me so full!" exclaimed John, with illuminated face turned upward. "He has been worth the world to me."

"He and I differ," said Mrs. Merrivale, quickly. "And I am surprised that he should do what he knows is contrary to my wishes. That you should, John, is not so surprising. You are my child," she added, with bitter significance.

"Mother, I do not desire to displease you; I do not!" cried John, with tearful earnestness.

"Then show some little regard for my feelings. Come!"

And Mrs. Merrivale led John sternly away.

"I am sorry to have offended you," said Junius, mildly. "I do not like to have you take John from me in this way. Let him remain, and we will go into the large drawing-room, and play ball or grace-hoop, if he likes."

It did John more good to engage in sports with Junius than with any one else. No other society to him was so precious. His face brightened at the proposal, and Mrs. Merrivale, who was aware how much physical strength he often derived from Junius, gave a ready consent. The young man smiled, and took John lovingly by the hand.

"You believe that I can impart vitality to his body, and permit me to do so," said he to Mrs. Merrivale. "But to his soul, of which the body is but the shifting and perishable dress, — you are not

willing that I should impart any strength to that. Very well! John's spirit is now alive. I saw it when it lay, as it were, darkly in the egg. I watched that growth which finally broke the shell. I fed it as I could, when it was new-fledged and helpless. But now its wings have grown; it is taking its first joyful flights; and I am not unwilling to leave it to itself. Come, my boy! now for grace-hoop and ball!"

The drawing-room — a spacious and elegant apartment — became the scene of pleasant sports. The laughter of John and his beloved friend blended musically. After a time, Louise joined them; and at length Martin, flushed and abstracted, came from the conference with his uncle, and sought to forget his trouble in the hilarity of the morning. And quite well he succeeded. He tried the grace-hoop with his charming cousin, who was now as gay as ever; crowning was not infrequent, and sweet debts, payable in the coin of kisses, were incurred. How prompt Martin was to make a "tender," as lawyers say, when the debt was his! How eager to present his bill, when the forfeit was on the other side! How ready, in either case, to compel justice with gentle force of arms! Ah, constancy! where was Sophronia then? — where Martin's vows and promises of love? Impertinent thought! Louise was only his cousin.

How swift the morning passed! All too soon the dinner was announced, and too soon over. The time arrived for Martin to depart; all the urgent solicitations of Louise and John having failed to alter his resolution, formed on leaving his uncle's chamber.

"I want him to call at the parsonage a few minutes," said Junius. "Come, John, you and Louise shall go with us. The ride will do you both good; and Margaret will be glad to see you."

Martin's cousins were delighted with the proposition. Their mother was less pleased. She was willing that John should go, but Louise she opposed with considerable spirit. The young lady was determined, however, and, after a private scene with her mother up stairs, she appeared, looking decidedly cross, and announced, with a forced smile, that she was ready to go.

Once on the road, she recovered her temper, and did much to make Martin forget that he was taking leave for the first, and, perhaps, for the last time, of Summer Hill. A good sleigh-track was already broken on the village road. The colonel's horses were spirited; the bells sang a merry tune; the weather was mild, the day bright, and the snow-scenery magnificent. Junius sat with John, and Louise entertained her cousin. It was a memorable ride; the only fault Martin found with it was its briefness.

Yet he was not sorry to arrive at the parsonage. Margaret, who ran out joyously to greet her friends, appeared to him like a new revelation of female loveliness. There was an indescribable charm about her which filled him with a thrilling sense of beauty; not so much in her form and face — which were fair indeed — as in her manner, her expression, the light of her eyes, and the tones of her voice.

When introduced to Martin, a blush and a smile flashed into her features radiantly.

"I ought to recognize a fellow-traveller," said she, extending her hand.

Martin was wonder-struck and speechless. It is certain that he never appeared so stupid in his life.

"I am hinting at a riddle, I perceive," she added, laughing. "Perhaps you will understand, when I tell you that I was in the stage last night."

"You!" articulated Martin.

"As you rode outside, I had no opportunity of thanking you for giving up your place to me," said Margaret, very sweetly.

"I — I never expected — I am surprised that you recognized me!"

"O! I remember your voice perfectly well. Besides, I saw you under circumstances not easy to forget." Martin blushed with pride and pleasure. "I felt conscience-stricken when you lost your hat, and had such a chase through the snow, all on my account!"

Martin blushed more violently than ever,— this time with mortification.

"You witnessed my ridiculous plight, then!"

"You never told me of this, Margaret," cried Junius.

"It is because I had no opportunity to tell you," replied his sister. "Last night I had writing to do for father, you know; and this morning you were off before I saw you. I trust Mr. Merrivale did not suffer from his adventure."

"On the contrary, I consider it a very fortunate one. For the loss of my hat, I have been compensated with the acquaintance of the Doanes, of your brother here, and, last and best of all," said Martin, gallantly, "of yourself."

By this time the party was comfortably seated in the cosiest of parlors, and Margaret, listening to the account of Martin's adventures, removed John's tippet from his neck, and warmed his cold hands in hers. Presently her whole attention was absorbed in the young invalid. She appeared to regard him with more than sisterly solicitude. So Martin thought; nor did he blame her; for, as John sat by the fire, with his gentle eyes and calm face turned towards her with a sweet smile, there was a spiritual

beauty in his expression rarely seen upon the face of mortals. Her countenance, too, was illuminated, — transfigured, so to speak, with a holy love, as she talked with him. The scene had a strange effect on Martin. His features beamed with indefinable aspirations, and tears came into his eyes.

Louise rallied him, and, apologizing for his abstraction, he took a seat near her. A lively dialogue ensued. But how unsatisfactory to Martin! The depths of his spirit had been stirred: infinite longings had been awakened within him; he thirsted for purest waters of the soul; and all his talk with the bright Louise seemed painfully frivolous.

How strange, — how strange is this human heart! The moon of beauty sways its impetuous tides, and the stars of spiritual being shape its destiny — we know not how. When we would look through this surface-life of the world, — when we would fathom and explore the soul's abyss, — the awful realm of mystery receives us; deep beyond deep, deep beyond deep, opens unto us forevermore!

Then why attempt to account for the change which had come over Martin? It was as if an angel hand had swept the hidden keys of his heart, and drawn forth tones of ineffable sadness and sweetness — so subtle was the influence that stole into the holiest recesses of his nature.

XXIV.

THE FLIGHT OF CALEB THORNE.

BLIND Alice lay upon the lounge in Mrs. Grayle's sitting-room. She was motionless, and very pale; she scarcely breathed; but now and then, at long intervals, a sigh heaved her fair young bosom, across which her pallid little hands lay clasped. By her side knelt Caleb Thorne, gazing upon her sweet face with a countenance dark with trouble.

"Father!" murmured the child.

The inebriate bowed his head and kissed her. As he did so, his frame shook, and two scalding tears fell upon her brow.

"O, don't feel bad, don't feel bad!" pleaded Alice, winding her tender arms around his neck. "I shall be well to-day. I got so cold and tired in the storm, last night — that 's all. O, we will be so happy now, dear father! You will not leave me any more; and I shall have my brother Martin with me, sometimes shan't I? He has been so good — so good to me!"

"O, my child!" sobbed Caleb, — "everybody is good to you except your father! Your father, Alice, — his love is a curse. It would be better for you if he were dead!"

His face contracted fiercely with self-hatred, and his passionate hands tore his hair convulsively.

"O, no, no!" cried Alice, pierced with anguish. "Don't say so! You have meant to do the best you could for me, and I love you all the same — all the same, dear father! I would not have you dead. You will be better now, I am sure."

"And I will work, my darling!" said Caleb, with sudden resolution. "I will be a demon and a curse no more. O, God!" he prayed, wringing his hands, and turning his haggard face upward, "help me, — be my support! Not for my sake, for I am unworthy; but for the sake of my child!"

Alice shuddered. Her father's prayer frightened her. It seemed full of wrath and terror, — so unlike the sweet peace and child-like resignation of her mother's prayers, which she remembered so well.

"My darling," Caleb went on, after a pause, "I have known what hell is. I have been in hell!"

"O!" shrieked Alice, faintly, covering her face with her hands.

"You do not understand me," her father hastened to say. "The fires of hell are evil passions. Ah, you don't know how they burn and torture the soul! Our wickedness kindles them; but the punishment is sent for our good, is it not? Tell me what you think, my child; you are so pure and good, you understand these things better than I do."

"God loves us all, — I am sure of it, dear father. He would not punish us, if it was not for our good. I thought of it, the

other night, when I put my hand in the flame of the lamp. I could not see the flame, and my hand might have burned up, if the pain had not told me to take it away. Pain is a good friend, father."

"O, if we were wise, so that pain might always teach us while it tortures us! If we would snatch our hands from the fires of sin when they burn us!" moaned Caleb. "But I will be wise now, my child. You shall be with me, and tell me these things with your pure lips. They will make me strong, and keep me strong."

"And the home you spoke of —"

"We will go to it as soon as you are able, Alice. I was not dreaming when I told you of it. But in the night and the storm I lost my way. I would go and find it this morning, and do some work I have promised to do, — but you cannot go with me, and I dare not leave you alone."

Alice clung to her father's arm. The thought of being separated from him for a moment alarmed her. She knew too well what it was to lose him, and remain for weeks ignorant of his fate. Yet something whispered in her ear, "Trust!" Peace fell like dew upon her spirit, and she told her father that he need not fear to leave her, if duty called him away.

"Yes, I ought to go, — I should be earning money to support us," Caleb murmured. "But I dare not trust you out of my sight." He looked wildly around him, as if even then he feared the approach of evil to his child. "You are blind — you need a protector always with you, Alice. And who should be your protector but your father?"

Alice smiled sadly. Perhaps she thought that he who would thus protect her was he above all others who had done her harm. Caleb understood her so, at least.

"I am a foolish man," said he, — "I know it. I am weak and fearful. But I will be so no longer. These people have been good to you — I will trust you with them still."

"How good they have been!" exclaimed the blind girl, with tears. "At a time, too, when they were so distressed. The woman who found us in the street, and was so kind to us, — she is some one they love, I should think; but she did not wish that they should see her. How kind it was in them to forget their own trouble, to be kind to us!"

"Yes, yes; I will trust you with them," said Caleb. "And now I will leave you for a little while. Do not fear but I shall be back at noon."

The parting between Alice and her father was an affecting one. It brought tears to Ellen's eyes as she watched them from the kitchen-door. As soon as Caleb was gone, the young girl ran forward, threw herself down by the lounge, and buried her face, weeping, in the curls of Alice. The affectionate child embraced her fondly, straining her to her bosom, and pressing her cheek to her own.

"How good you are! — how good you are!" she murmured. "What makes you care for me?"

"I love you so!" said Ellen.

"How can you love me? I am such a little nobody, I should n't think you would. I am blind, and never can do anything to pay you for all you do for me."

"That 's what makes me love you all the more!"

"You make me so happy!" whispered Alice, with an angelic smile, and a deep sigh of pleasure.

Then Hettie came in very softly, looked for a moment with wondering eyes upon the strange beauty of the blind girl, and asked Ellen, in a whisper, if she might kiss her.

"Yes, darling," said Alice, who overheard her, putting out her arms.

"Don't worry that poor creature, children!" cried Mrs. Grayle, entering from the kitchen. "She wants rest. Come away."

"When they love me — that does me more good than anything else," said Alice. She gave Hettie an eager embrace, then let her go. "But, if you don't wish them to be here, I will not keep them."

"O, I 'm glad to have them kind and attentive to you," returned Mrs. Grayle, with moist eyes. "But I think you 'd better try to get a nap. And you can't sleep while they 're here."

"May n't I sit here on the stool, if I 'll be still?" asked Hettie, in a big whisper.

Her mother said no; so the child, after smoothing one of Alice's soft curls in her hand very fondly, withdrew, somewhat reluctantly, to the other room. Ellen put some wood in the stove, then gave the blind girl a parting kiss, dropped a few cheering words into her heart, wished her a pleasant nap, and followed her mother and sister.

It was some time before Alice slept. Strangest fancies visited her. She thought that angels came and brought her flowers, and talked to her sweetly, and sang to her, and played on harps, bright and golden as the sun. But at length slumber stole softly down, like the shadow of a calm summer twilight; and once more, in her dreams, the sympathetic Ellen told her how much she loved her; Hettie lay like a cherub in her arms; and everybody was good to her.

How sound and blissful her sleep was! She did not know when

Uncle Joe came in to see her, on his way home to dinner. Pale and still, yet peaceful and happy, she lay with her cheeks half hidden in curls, her sweet mouth faintly smiling, and her almost transparent eyelids, fringed with long, dark lashes, sweetly closed.

"The little dearie!" said Uncle Joe, in his whispered growl. He winked away a tear, and touched her hair lightly with his big finger. "I 'm glad she 's here. 'Tendin' on her 'll make sister forgit the shock of last night. Beats all," he added, with a darkening of his ruddy face, "'t I could n't hear nor see nothin' o' that 'ere dear girl 'at run off so in the storm!"

"Don't you think Clara will come and see us, now she is in town?" whispered Ellen.

The carpenter shook his head, and patted Ellen's cheek. Before he could speak, Alice put up her hands, uttered a feeble cry, and awoke.

"You were dreaming," said Ellen, getting down by her side.

"I saw my brother Martin falling — falling — and I could not save him," replied the blind girl. "The dream awoke me."

Alice was much rested and refreshed after her sleep. She talked cheerfully with Ellen, with Uncle Joe, and with Benjie, who presently returned from school. When old Grayle came home to dinner, he found her sitting up, with an interested group around her, listening to her story.

The arrival of Cheesy, flushed and out of breath, shortly after, was an event of some magnitude. At the book-keeper's suggestion, he had run around to Mr. Wormlett's boarding-house, on leaving the store, to inform Martin what had happened to Alice, and where she was.

"He wan't to hum, though," said he, as the blind girl bent eagerly forward to hear the news. "He 's gone into the country some'er's, they said."

"I knew he went," cried Alice. "But he was to come right back. I thought he would be here to-day."

"I see an old maid at the door," returned Cheesy. "I did n't want to see none o' them Wormletts, for I s'pose like 's not they 're on the look-out for me; so I asked her 'bout Mr. Mer'vale, and done my arrant to her; and she was tickled enough to hear from ye, you better believe!"

"It was Miss Tomes — the good Miss Tomes!"

"Yes, that 's the very name. She told me to tell ye Mr. Mer-'vale 'd come and see ye jes' 's soon 's he got back, and that she'd come up herself, right away, after dinner."

"There, there! that 's what I call pooty handsome!" cried the benevolent carpenter, chucking Alice under the chin. "That 'll cheer ye up, to see old friends, — won't it, hey? This reminds me o' one o' my boyish scrapes, Benjie. I was a dre'ful hard ticket, when I was a boy," added Uncle Joe, with relish, shaking his head sorrowfully. "I got riled at suthin' to home, and took it into my head to run away, and go to sea. Wal, I fell in with a company o' sailors, and told my story, and got their sympathy, as I thought, and was chucklin' a good deal over the glory o' my revenge, — thinkin' how bad our folks u'd feel about it. — when they begun to pester me. They told me the dre'fulest stories about sea-farin' life you ever heard on. I got awfully frightened and said, Come to think, I guessed I would n't go to sea, arter all. But they only laughed at me and hectored me the more; so I changed my tune, told 'em I was only jokin' — I was f'erce for goin' with 'em, and I know'd two more boys who 'd jump at the chance to go too, if they 'd let me jest dodge up to the corner of our street, and speak to 'em. But that would n't do, neither; they did n't want more 'n one boy,

they said; and they did n't like to le' me go, fear I lotter by the way, and be too late to sail at dusk. That scar't me more 'n anything, and sot me to thinkin' what a fool I was, and what a comf'table home I 'd left; — but I would n't cry; I was too spunky for that, Benjie. Wal, I 'd gi'n up, and s'posed I 'd have to go to sea, and make the best on 't, when I looked up and see father comin' arter me. If you 're half as glad to see your friends, Alice, as I was to see that 'ere limpin' ol' gentleman, your skin 'll scurcely hold ye. But jest see what an artful little imp I was, now, Benjie! I was a desp'ate wicked boy — I 'm sorry to say. I knowed father 'd take me home; so I spunked up, and pretended 't I did n't want him to; I 'd got my mind sot on goin' to sea, and was goin', anyway; and ef he did n't let me go then, I 'd run away agin, fust chance —"

The carpenter paused, astonished, in the midst of his narrative Benjie had nudged him, and pointed towards the door. There stood Aunt Lucia, a sublime picture of an indignant female, whose rights could n't be trampled upon any longer.

"Mister Joseph Kevill," she cried, with terrible emphasis, "are you comin' home to dinner to-day, or not?"

"Yes, yes, mother — right away, this minute," said the conciliatory carpenter. "Don't worry — don't fret, mother. I 'll be right along."

"Don't worry — don't fret — you 'll be right along!" repeated Aunt Lucia. "Mister Kevill, this 'ere 's too much for human natur'! You 've no respect for my feelin's, and never had. Here my dinner 's been waitin' this half hour an' more —"

"Wal, wal! we 'll go and eat it. Your dinners are so good, mother, 't they 'll bear to be kept half a day, and beat common dinners then."

So saying, Uncle Joe hurried his wife away, receiving a good portion of her lecture in the street, and the remainder at home, whilst she was engaged in setting the table for that dinner fabled to have been waiting half an hour.

At the request of Alice, Cheesy was repeating, as nearly as possible, all Miss Tomes had said, when Mrs. Grayle, heated and exhausted with work, announced, in a depressed way, that she believed her dinner was ready, after a fashion; and he was invited to sit down with the family.

"I d'n' know 's I oughter," said he, grinning and twisting his hat over his knee. "I 'd like to, fust-rate; but I guess I 'd better go hum."

"You have nothing in particular to go home for, have you?" asked Ellen.

"No, nothin' particular — but —"

"Then I guess you 'll stay."

Ellen put away his hat; and Cheesy, grinning more than ever, and appearing quite at a loss what to do with his unoccupied hands, followed the family into the kitchen. Ellen led out Alice, who, beginning to be anxious again about her father, said she did not think she could eat anything, but that she would sit at the table, since her friends wished her to, for company.

The dinner passed. Still Caleb Thorne did not make his appearance. At length the door-bell rang. Alice hoped then that he had come. But it was only Miss Tomes, — the good Miss Tomes, — whom the blind girl was nevertheless rejoiced to meet. The good book-folder was full of goodness as ever; it flowed over into the heart of little blind Alice, and filled her with happiness.

"O, yes," said Miss Tomes, "Martin will come and see you, the moment he returns; I am sure he will. You don't know how

well he loves you. I left a note for him, telling him all about it; so that, if he goes to the house while I am away, he will know where you are to be found. He will come here the first thing."

Poor Alice felt her bosom warm with hope. But once more the shadow, that had stood between her and Martin, arose before her; it approached, and, laying one hand upon her heart, and the other upon the heart of Miss Tomes, thrust them asunder. At the same time there were heavy footsteps on the floor.

"My father!" cried Alice, in joyful surprise.

"Who have you here?" demanded Caleb, huskily.

"O, this is Miss Tomes — the good Miss Tomes, father."

Caleb's dark features grew darker still. Miss Tomes curtseyed, and smiled, and said. "How do you do, sir?" looking very red and confused.

"She lives where my brother Martin does," Alice went on; "and, don't you think, she says he will come and see me the first thing, when he gets back from the country."

Darker still grew the jealous Caleb's features, and redder still those of the good Miss Tomes. She quite lost her self-possession; so, after making a few confused remarks about the weather, and other kindred topics, she took leave of Alice, and beat a precipitate retreat to the kitchen, where she introduced herself, and enjoyed a real womanly interchange of thought and feeling — such as men know not of — with Mrs. Grayle.

Cheesy and the book-keeper had by this time gone to the store; Miss Tomes took leave soon after; and the children set out for school. Ellen, who had stayed at home in the morning for the blind girl's sake, now bade her an affectionate good-by, and left her in care of her father.

Caleb had dined, he said, where he worked in the forenoon.

Mrs. Grayle doubted him, for his manner was strange, and his story incoherent; but, perceiving that he could not be prevailed upon to eat anything, she withdrew to the kitchen.

"You are better — a good deal better, my child," then said Caleb, in a low, eager tone of voice.

"O, yes, I am so much better!"

"Quite strong again, my child. I am glad of it! I want you to walk a little way with me, if you can."

"Walk — in the street?" asked the child, alarmed.

"The home I told you of — it is quite near here," said Caleb, glancing anxiously around him. "If we were there, we would be free from all trouble. I will never leave you again, my darling. You shall sit by me when I work, and we will talk together all day long."

"And my friends can come and see me?" inquired Alice, her little heart quivering between hope and fear.

"Yes — your friends," muttered Caleb, darkly. "Come — shall we go now?"

"O, but I dread — something!" cried Alice in deep trouble.

"You need not. I am myself now, darling; I am strong. You know," Caleb went on in a hoarse whisper, "it will not be right for us to burden our friends. These good people — they are poor, and we must not suffer them to do so much for us, that they cannot well afford to do."

"I had thought of that," faltered Alice. "And you are right, I am sure. But" — she pressed her forehead with both hands — "I have such a pain here just now — I don't know what I do or say. The room seems turning round and round. Will you catch me, if I go to fall?"

"You will not fall, my child. Here is my hand. Ha!" cried

Caleb, — it was well the child could not see the look that lighted up his glassy eyes, — "you can walk bravely! Here are your things."

"And this bundle Miss Tomes brought — shall we take that? How good she was to think to bring it! She knew that I would want the things I left behind. But, father," — the poor child held her aching forehead in her palms as before, with an expression of pain, — "is this right? I want to thank all my kind friends here, and bid them good-by."

"They are not here now," whispered Caleb. "We will come back this evening, perhaps, and thank them. We will see about that."

He opened the door in silence, and passed out, supporting blind Alice with his arm. Along the path in the yard, and through the gate, and up the snowy street, the fearful father hastened with his child. Mrs. Grayle, engaged in the kitchen, heard the gate close, and, thinking somebody had come, hurriedly wiped her hands, and prepared to throw off her work-apron; but, looking out into the yard, she saw no one; the door-bell did not ring; and, entering the sitting-room, she discovered, to her astonishment, that her strange guests were gone.

"There! it 's just as I was afraid it would be!" she muttered, fretfully. "No good ever comes of entertaining vagabonds. They are gone, bag and baggage, without so much as saying, Thank you; and who knows how much they have carried away that don't belong to them?"

She looked around; but, unable to make out that anything had been stolen, and recalling the image of the sweet, frail, blind girl, her heart began to soften, and resentment gave place to solicitude for their welfare. She ran out upon the street, to look for them; but already they had disappeared.

As Caleb had said, his new "home" was not far off. Alice was conscious of turning one or two corners, and of being hurried swiftly along a noisy thoroughfare, until her father, drawing her eagerly into a doorway, seemed to stop and take breath, and look around him.

"This is the place," he said, in a quick tone. "We are safe now, my child. No one has seen us."

"And what if we should be seen?" asked the bewildered girl.

Caleb muttered some incoherent words about enemies that pursued him, which made the poor child tremble more and more; and, opening the door without ringing, led her into a hollow-sounding hall. Then commenced a tedious ascent of dreary flights of stairs, the labor of which made Alice so sick and dizzy, that more than once she was obliged to sit down and rest. Her father tried to bear her in his arms; but, now that the excitement of flight was over, he was scarce stronger than she. At length they reached a garret-room, which he said was to be her room; and the sick child, longing so much for repose, heaved a deep sigh of relief. But disappointment met her; the door was locked.

"Never mind; keep up courage," said Caleb. "We will go into the work-room; it is down only one flight."

He tried the latch of the room below, and some one opened it from within. A stifling atmosphere swept over the blind girl's delicate senses — an atmosphere of various and indescribable qualities, the most marked of which appeared to be the smell of varnish and tobacco-smoke.

"Ho, ho!" said a cracked voice, close to the child's face, — and at the same time the odor of a rummy breath predominated, — "you 've brought your little waif, Mr. Thorne. How do you do, my chuck?"

A hot hand touched Alice's cold cheek, not unkindly; but Caleb snatched it away, and led her to a seat in the midst of varnish-pots, artists' materials, and pictures of apparently every age, kind and color, which filled up and littered the little old smoky room.

"Well, that 's cool! that 's frigid! that smacks of the polar regions, Mr. Thorne," said the cracked voice, with good-humored sarcasm; and, had not Alice been blind, she might have seen a grim, checkered, one-eyed visage leering upon her father. "You 're quite stiff with your friends to-day. Well, sir, I don't blame you; I should be, if I was the father of such a little beauty."

"She is faint," replied Caleb, in a downcast, evasive manner. "I was afraid you would be rough with her."

"Rough! Bob Synders rough! Bless you, I was famous for the delicacy of my manners, in my better days. I know what 's due to the sex — especially to such a tender flower as this. Faint, is she? Just let her taste a drop — "

Mr. Synders brought something from a closet, which he offered to give the child. But Caleb, in a sudden access of fury, dashed it from his hand upon the floor; and Alice heard a ring and jingle, as of shattered glass.

"I would kill her with my own hand, before she should drink it!" articulated the excited man.

Mr. Synders regarded the incident as a good joke. He doubled up with laughter. He rubbed his red nose with merriment. His one eye — an inflamed one, by the way — twinkled with mirth.

"What a sentiment! from the lips, too, of the virtuous and temperate Mr. Thorne!" he exclaimed, as soon as he could speak. "It is too good! — it is exquisite!"

Appearing to take no notice of his friend's comments, Caleb inquired for the key to Alice's room; and Mr. Synders, recovering from another fit of laughter, replied that Peliqué probably had it in his pocket, down stairs. Thereupon Caleb set out to go down after it, charging Alice to sit still till his return, and warning the merry proprietor of the checkered face to beware of trying any more of his experiments for the cure of faintness.

"A jolly cove he is," observed Mr. Synders, pleasantly. "We 're the best friends in the world. But he 's an odd stick. So you are his little blind daughter, hey? Well, I can sympathize with you," he added, quite tenderly. "I 've only one eye, myself."

A chord was touched in the bosom of Alice, and she listened with interest.

"O, yes," Mr. Synders went on, "I lost my left peeper fifteen years ago. But it 's different from yours. One would n't guess you were blind, to look into your pretty blue eyes; while mine give me such an ugly, vicious, sinister, satanic, old hag's appearance, that it 's no comfort to look in the glass. I was a pretty good-looking man, though, once. Well, I can say it myself now — I was considered handsome. There was a young woman going to marry me for my beauty, — would you believe? But I was a wild boy; had the misfortune to inherit a fortune — a small one, by the way; became too reckless to please the devil himself, — so he led me into temptation, and got me into a fight, which I came out of with only one eye. Then my beauty was ruined; then the ambitious young woman would n't have me; then I got more desperate than ever, and took hard to drink; then my fortune went like the dew; then — well, never mind! here I am, a one-eyed, blotched," — Mr. Synders glanced at a fragmentary

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..., when your father was in the House of Correction."

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mirror over the mantelpiece, and gave an inventory of his charms, — "scowling, inflamed, broken-toothed, broken-headed, broken-backed, broken-hearted, jolly son of the sire of sinners — at your service."

Mr. Synders spoke in a gay tone of artificial humor, but beneath that false surface swept a black stream of sorrow and tragedy, which made poor Alice shudder.

"Luckily, I learned to paint before that devil's bait of a fortune tempted me. People said I would make a great artist; and I think I had genius; for painting came natural to me, and I used to delight in it, before I forsook my art to go after strange gods. Well, the talent I cultivated in my better days serves me now. I work for that parchment-faced, sharp-eyed, sharp-nosed, queer, quick, quirkish, querulous, little, old, withered wandering Jew of a Frenchman, Moshure Peliqué. He 's a restorer of old paintings, and a dealer in pictures in general; but his principal business lies in a simple, honest, beautiful and catholic trick he has of smoking up trashy modern paintings to make 'em look ancient, and pass for valuable works of the old masters. A common picture, of the right tone to suit his purpose, such as he gets at auction for fifteen dollars, more or less, we make worth three, four, five, ten, twenty times as much, with the use of a little smoke, varnish, and perhaps a touch and a shade here and there of the most sallow and sombre coloring that can be produced. But this don't interest you much. Tell me something about yourself, — I 've given you my story."

"What shall I tell you?"

"O, to begin with, let me hear what you did, what happened to you, and so forth, when your father was in the House of Correction."

"The House of Correction?" repeated Alice, wondering.

"Bless you, don't you know? I do, as easy as the boy knew his father," replied the facetious Mr. Synders. "It's a rather pleasant establishment, to which persons of eccentric habits are sometimes recommended, for a change of scene, you know."

"Father — has he been there?" eagerly asked the child.

"To be sure. He enjoyed a delightful three-months' residence in that benevolent institution, I believe."

"Tell me about it. I don't understand. You frighten me. It — it — is n't a jail, is it? Was he obliged to stay there?"

"It's my impression that was the case — or something near it. But you need n't feel bad about it," observed Mr. Synders, as Alice began to weep. "Some very respectable people go there. In fact, I 've been there myself. It was there I got acquainted with your virtuous parent — a valuable connection to him, for I used my influence to get him this place, when we came out. He is a very good painter, besides being quite ingenious; so there is a chance of his making himself very useful to this swearing, swaggering, swindling, sweet, Jew-Frenchman of a Moshure Peliqué."

"Why did they put him there — in the House of Correction?"

"It was a false charge, I am confident, my dear; but, to tell you just the plain truth, he was taken before the police court, and sentenced as a common drunkard. Come, don't feel bad! I 'm sorry I told you. I did n't know you 'd cry so. Never mind; it 's all over with now. Your father is out; he 's got a good business, and enjoys my friendship, — which is saying a good deal, you know," said Mr. Synders, coaxingly.

Alice heard her father's step, and hastened to dry her tears. When Caleb entered, he found his fellow-artist engaged in putting a fresh head of hair on a faded Virgin, and whistling as innocently as if he had not spoken to the blind girl during his absence.

XXV.

MARTIN — ALICE.

AFTER the departure of Louise and John in Colonel Merrivale's sleigh, Martin walked with Junius to the village, — a pleasant, old-fashioned little place, — and purchased a hat, to replace the one he had lost. He then went to return the article borrowed of Mr. Jared Doane; spent an hour or more in conversation with the excellent Martha and her brother; and finally took leave of them with as much interest and sympathy as if he had known them for years, and learned all their gentle qualities by heart.

He was still accompanied by Junius. They arrived at the parsonage just at tea-time; and Mr. Murray — a happy old gentleman, in wig and spectacles — joined his daughter Margaret in inviting Martin to remain and give them his company at supper. The young man could not refuse; and the time sped so pleasantly — there was such a charm in the atmosphere of the parsonage — that he was easily prevailed upon to pass the night with his new friends. It was a memorable night for Martin. The simple

piety of the parson; the high spiritual philosophy of his son; the aroma of purity and grace that surrounded Margaret, like the fragrance of a flower; sweet influences these, that filled him with a holy rapture. His purest feelings were drawn out; all that was good within him seemed stimulated and aroused; his whole being was sanctified, — his soul baptized in floods of sacred fire. On the following morning, as he returned by the cars to Boston, he could not but look back upon that night as a turning-point in his existence. All things were changed to his eyes. A great fountain of love seemed swelling up in his heart, and flowing out, flowing out, to God, to all his creatures, even to inanimate things. When in this frame of mind, an unjust man, still in the darkness of passion, seized him, blustering and angry, and charged him with stealing his seat. Two days before, the fiery Martin would have shook him off and flung back his insults into his very teeth; but now he had forgiveness enough for twenty such poor, unfortunate slaves of ignorance and selfishness, and his eyes filled with tears of compassion as he looked on him.

"I don't know whose seat this is," said he, mildly; "I supposed I had a right to it; but I would rather walk to Boston than see any man angry, such a glorious winter's day as this is."

In Boston, change still met Martin's eye, — change objective, no less than subjective, — without of himself, as well as within himself.

The storm had altered the aspect of the town. Street-signs were changed; fires had devastated familiar spots; and, arrived at his boarding-house, he found that quite a revolution had occurred. The news of Alice's departure came upon him with a shock; he scarcely gave heed to the whisper that Grandfather Wormlett was dying, but hastened to the house in Pleasant-street.

There he found Mr. Leviston, who told him the story of Caleb Thorne's disappearance with his child. He had spent all that morning trying to discover traces of them, but without success; and Martin knew not what more could be done. He felt sick at heart. A deep shadow of trouble rested upon his spirit, so lately light with joy, and he walked back to Portland-street with Mr. Leviston in silence.

Mrs. Wormlett saw them on the stairs, and asked them to go in and see the corpse. The old man had breathed his last. They entered the chamber, not without repugnance, and saw a sight too hideous to be described. The face of the dead still wore the loathsome mark which avarice stamps indelibly upon the faces of its victims, old and young; and the coins upon the eyes appeared like a frightful satire. Mr. Wormlett stood by the bed, holding the hand of young Simeon, who writhed, and glanced, with a mingled expression of fear and perplexity, from the face of the dead grandfather to that of the living father.

"Simeon, my son," said Mr. Wormlett, solemnly, "let this 'ere be a lesson to ye; let this 'ere be a lesson, my son, to be remembered the longest day you live."

He appeared unable to say more. He coughed, and made an effort, but could only repeat the same words over again,— "Simeon, my son, let this 'ere be a lesson." His philosophy of life did not somehow reach that extreme case. Not one of his great moral maxims would apply there.

"What lesson?" asked Sim, twisting himself about, and looking dreadfully uneasy.

What lesson, indeed! Is the boy to take example from his grandfather, and so live that his end may be like his? Is he to understand that in a little while his father will lie there the same?

that he himself, after a similar brief career of money-getting, must come to this ghastliness of feature and complexion? that it is thus the awful boon of existence should be used, and the great design of an immortal soul's probation on earth be fulfilled?

Mr. Wormlett answereth not.

Let us pass over the space of several days. Martin has fled from Portland-street. With Mr. Leviston, he has taken lodgings in a genteel sort of house at the West End. Mrs. Befflin is an industrious widow-woman, making a spasmodic struggle for a livelihood by keeping boarders. The meagreness of her table is redeemed by a certain air of smartness which distinguishes the establishment. The furniture of the parlors is ambitious, but faded; and there is a sickly attempt at fashionable display in all the rooms. The society there is mixed and various. Two lawyers, a quack doctor, a teacher of French and German, several dry-goods clerks, an editor, a piano-tuner, and a couple of young gentlemen-of-leisure, suspected of gambling propensities, compose the male portion of the household. Among the females, there are three sewing-girls, a school-teacher and a teacher of music, two California widows, and a wild creature of thirty-five, unmarried, who is supposed to have had her wits shattered by an early disappointment. But the bright particular star, as yet unnamed, is Miss Befflin. "A young lady of rare accomplishments!" as Turnlip, the quack-doctor, whispers to Martin. "A distinguished singer and player; would shine in the opera; is remarked for her powerful touch and brilliant execution on the piano." Martin, however, does not appreciate the screaming and thundering of her musical performances. He is blind to her fascinations. "O Cicely! where are thy charms, that others have seen in thy

face?" is the query of Martin's mind. Her highly genteel manners affect him not. While, from necessity, her hard-working mother is fretting and glowing over her puddings and roasts, putting her own hands to the drudgery of the establishment, Miss Befflin plays the lady. No labor soils her delicate fingers. She is entirely devoted to her gentility. At breakfast she has never been seen within the memory of man. Rarely before noon does she leave the sacred precincts of her chamber. But at dinner she descends with a great rustling of silks; pallid and languishing, in a luxuriance of curls and cosmetics. At Martin she levels all the artillery of her smiles. Her weak prattle of authors and books is intended expressly for his ear. The other boarders smile; for, while they admire the fair Cicely, they know her foibles; they are well aware that for four years she, with her mother's aid and counsel, has exercised all her powers of fascination in efforts to secure a husband; and they curiously observe her progress with the new boarder. What a pity that his affections are already engaged!

Martin can scarce be reconciled to his change of life. Not that he has become very strongly attached to the Wormlett family. Not that he misses the society of Miss Tomes very much, or that the genial Toplink is indispensable to his happiness. But Alice, — she is lost to him; uncertainty shrouds her fate; and the memory of her pure love haunts him night and day. At his daily tasks, when he remembers how patiently the sweet child used to sit by his side, making no noise, while he wrote, he experiences a choking sensation from a swelling of the heart, which often compels him to throw down his pen, and turn, sickened, from his work.

To whom now shall he go for that sympathy he drew from her spiritual nature? George Leviston is a true friend, — a blunt,

plain-speaking friend, who affords him refreshment in rude shocks of honest manhood, when the blandishments and conformities of an insipid society have left him weak. But only on a certain plane can he meet him with satisfaction. He is conscious of a world of feeling within, uninhabited by human sympathies. The existence thereof is unknown to all his town acquaintance — even to Leviston.

Even to Sophronia! What poor little blind Alice discerned in him and loved, the gay young lady cannot see. Alas for Martin, that at this late hour he should feel the want! Only Sophronia's exterior has charmed him. The soul he looked for he finds not. She cannot accompany his spirit in its range. The waters of a pure, deep, universal love, which swell and palpitate within him, which he must, of a necessity, pour out on some one, are wasted on her. Not a drop from that sacred fountain will she drink. Only the bubbles and the spray delight her.

Sophronia cannot but perceive his frequent coldness and abstraction. So she pouts and frets most charmingly, and shakes her lovely curls with all the innocent artfulness that first brought Martin to her feet. Sometimes he forgets the ache he feels, — or tries to, at least,—and seeks momentary consolation in endearments. But the truth will not be glossed over so; it will not be silenced and put aside. The still, small voice of prophecy speaks within him, and says, "Between her and thee there can be no union."

Sophronia does not know what to make of it. She is certain that Martin loves another. She throws out bitter taunts about blind Alice, then about his cousin Louise, and lastly about Margaret Murray, of whose rare womanly qualities he has often spoken. But suddenly she makes a discovery, which confirms her

worst fears, but which acquits alike Margaret, Louise and Alice, of rivalship. One evening Martin finds her in a desperate state. She flings his daguerreotype at him half across the room. She tells him to go away from her, the false, cruel, heartless man, and falls upon the sofa, covering her face in a passionate fit of weeping. Martin, alarmed and distressed, draws forth the secret of her woe.

"You can have her, of course, if you prefer her to me!" she exclaims, bitterly. "You need n't think I shall object."

"You give her to me very much as if she were a torpedo to blow me up," says Martin, smiling. "But, pray, who is this fabulous fair one — this unknown quantity you have arrived at in working out your problem of jealousy?"

"O, you don't know, of course!"

"Certainly, I cannot guess."

"I suppose," retorts Sophronia, with venom, from under her curls, "you never heard of Miss Tomes."

"Miss Tomes!" repeats Martin, with the drollest look. "Who has been telling you about Miss Tomes?"

"O, then you have heard of her?"

"To be sure — I have boarded with her! But what do you mean?"

"You need n't try to appear so ignorant. I know all about it Mr. Merrivale! There! you laugh — I would n't have believed you could be such a hypocrite!"

"I laugh, because it is extremely funny, my poor girl. This Miss Tomes is an old maid — as good a creature as ever lived, but the very last person in this world you should be jealous of."

"You would like me to believe, then," cries Sophronia, "that you don't love her?"

Martin laughs again, until laughter becomes painful. The idea is too absurd. But presently the affair assumes a serious aspect, and so does he. Sophronia has a quiver full of little facts, gathered he cannot guess where, which she shoots at him in rapid succession, with telling effect. Absurd idea, is it? Then wherefore does he writhe? Whence this irritation? Why this red flaming up of eye and cheek?

Ah, Martin! thou hast been betrayed. That good Miss Tomes — she is a weak creature, with all her goodness. Thy kind attentions to her have been misconstrued. Thy merest words of friendship have fallen on her inflammable fancy like fiery droppings from the torch of love. And all — she has imparted all, in strictest confidence, to her cousin Matilda, the dressmaker; and her cousin Matilda, the dressmaker, who works for Mrs. Dabney, has detailed the entire story, in strictest confidence, to Sophronia.

Martin is chafed beyond expression. No wonder. He finds that circumstances most commonplace and trivial have been repeated to that cousin of hers, by the confidential Miss Tomes. How he one evening entered the boarding-house parlor, and, bending over her chair, whispered in her ear; how he knocked his hat off, kissing her, the day he went into the country, and blushed as he picked it up; and how he said and did twenty other equally foolish things, on various occasions, — with this precious nonsense Sophronia overflows. But the worst of all is, Miss Tomes has no doubt but he would like to marry her, but thinks him too bashful to propose!

It is as if a swarm of insects were stinging Martin. It is as if, after a bath of brine, he had been rubbed dry with nettles.

"And you, Sophronia, believe this detestable stuff!" he cries.

"Very well! I scorn to make explanations. I will leave you till you come to your senses."

He does not leave her, though, just at the moment; how can he, with her arms about his neck, and her fair head, with all its wealth of beautiful curls, upon his shoulder?

"I did believe it! — but, forgive me; I was crazy! I know now it could n't be true, you are so noble and good! Only say you don't love any one else, and then I shall be sure that what I have heard is all a horrid, horrid lie!"

A word, and she is pacified and happy. Not so Martin. He contemplates revenge. He studies how he shall overwhelm that vain Miss Tomes with the avalanche of his indignation. But a little reflection teaches him that noise about such an affair should be avoided. Anger is beneath the dignity of a man. To boisterous passion he will not stoop. Yet punishment there shall be — silent, swift and certain. Wormwood shall be administered! juice of bitter wormwood, corked up tight in the vial of his pride, to be slightly shaken before taken, he will pour out drop by drop, and make his victim drink it to the dregs! But — no; a better thought reveals itself, — a purer ray of light. Revenge, resentment — he banishes them from his breast. He sees the bright side of Miss Tomes; all her genuine disinterested kindness to the blind orphan comes up fresh in his memory. She has been a little weak, perhaps, although in no wise malicious: (God grant that others may have no greater faults to overlook in him!) a little weak; but shall we extend no charity to those less strong than we? If we have strength, whence comes it? Let us be humbly thankful for the gift, and despise not those to whom it is denied. Beware, proud soul! of atheism, which is the root of pride.

And, after a little while, Martin walks forth, his thoughts puri-

fied of evil. The serene stars inspire him; his soul expands; he aspires to that majesty of manhood which, in the pain of injuries inflicted, smiles, forgives and loves. And henceforth he feels only the warmest wishes for Miss Tomes' happiness. He calls to see her, with gifts. No word he breathes of all that he has heard; no look informs her that her weakness has been betrayed. Very careful he is, truly, what nonsense he utters; and he taketh pains, indirectly, to convince her that he has nothing but friendship for her; that is all.

Martin has labored faithfully and fondly, all this time, to develop in Sophronia the soul his soul yearns for; to turn her pretty tinsel of affection into gold; to enkindle under all a generous fire, to burn away the dross. This labor of love — he pursues it still. To wean her from the idols of a false and frivolous life, he introduces her into sweet fields of poesy; takes her hand to lead her up the glorious hills of song; gives her to drink of immortal streams of thought. To awaken in her a love of the good, the beautiful, the true, he lavishes his wealth of feeling upon her, freely as he would pour out water to thirsty kine. But she turns from all with weary yawns. "Let us leave this dull business, and enjoy ourselves." In the midst of his noble enthusiasm, she proposes backgammon!

Again and again the still small voice within him repeats — "Between her and thee there can be no union. Thou art pouring thyself into a leaky vessel." He begins to understand those feelings of blind Alice which he accounted unto her for jealousy. He can conceive now how he used to carry home to her an influence so uncongenial to her pure spirit. He thinks he comprehends why it was he never wrote so truthfully and sweetly when daily and nightly all his sympathies were drawn down to so low a level. It

was as Alice said: from the mountain he was climbing he looked off upon a valley, and saw a beautiful mist curling up from below. Charmed by its shining waves, he descended to meet it; when gradually all its beauties disappeared; the mist, after all, was but a cold, wet mist, that chilled him, and absorbed the vitality of his spirit. He sees it all now, and his only wish is — to retrace his steps. But he is not heartless, nor devoid of conscience. He would spare Sophronia the anguish of a separation. He is even willing to sacrifice his happiness for hers. But the voice says, "Thou canst not make her happy. To attempt it, by persisting in this false union, is to sin against God's law. Whatever you may have done amiss yesterday, DO RIGHT TO-DAY."

Martin's sufferings in this struggle cannot be told. How bitterly he repents the ignorance, the blind impulse, which led him into this fatal maze of error! Sophronia, who, when the crisis arrives, declares herself heart-broken, and threatens to drown herself, knows not a tenth part of his soul's agony. But a sense of duty impels him, and the deed is done. Sophronia is his Sophronia no longer.

The blunt Leviston adds to his torment, by declaring that he has acted basely.

"What is more selfish and cruel than to win a girl's young love, to throw it away when won?" he demands.

"Nothing!" murmurs the crushed Martin.

"It is not with her as it is with you," that stern censor goes on, as if he felt a savage joy in torturing the man who could be guilty of the treachery he hates. "In a week you will be making a similar mistake, as you call it, with another unsuspecting, affectionate girl — winning her heart, to discover, afterwards, that it was not worth winning. But she has nothing to do but to brood over her disappointment!"

"I know it — I know it! But, good Heaven!" groans Martin, "what can I do?"

"What can you do? I don't know. But I know what I should do, if it was my case. I don't believe in such mistakes. If I had won a girl's affections, as you have hers, I should consider marriage a solemn and sacred obligation. A man has no business to be dissatisfied with a woman's heart, after getting it into his power."

Faithful friend as he is, there is nothing tender about George Leviston. He means well; but his words sound coarse to Martin; they grate upon his sensitive nature. And this is the consolation of friendship! It is as if a man that had tasted garlic should think to sweeten his mouth by drinking gall.

Then follow days and nights of solitary trouble. Sometimes Martin seeks what honeyed solace he can from the thought that he might have been far less manly; that he might have continued to dissemble and deceive, drawing his neck from under the yoke sneakingly by degrees; that he might have subjected Sophronia's love to the slow death of a year's neglect and doubt, as cowardice and indecision would have counselled him to do. Was it not well to be true — to turn speedily about, the moment he felt well assured that he was travelling the road of error? Something says, "It was!" but still conscience clings to him, and rides upon his shoulders with a scourge!

A crisis arrives at last. Taking up a morning paper, at his boarding-house, he reads that a female, young and well-dressed, lately committed suicide by throwing herself off South Boston bridge. Just the thing Sophronia called Heaven to witness that she would do! And he has felt a misgiving that she would do it, all along. For three weeks he has not been able to glance at the

chapter of casualties in the newspapers, without thinking of her threat; and the word "suicide" has caused him many a start. He reads that the body has been recovered, but not recognized, and, in a trepidation of alarm, rushes out of the house. He meets Mr. Tiplilly rushing in.

"It is true, then!" he mutters, in sick despair.

"Yes," lisps Tiplilly, catching his breath.

"Sophronia!" repeats the ghastly Martin.

"She has thrown herself—" gasps Tiplilly, with something like a hysteric laugh. "But I can't talk. Let us go up to your room, and I will tell you about it."

Martin is almost too weak to ascend the stairs; but he somehow accomplishes the feat, and sinks, faint, and pallid, and trembling, upon a chair.

"Thophrony has thrown herself away at last," chuckles Tiplilly.

"Eh? thrown herself away?"

"Really, I look upon it so — I am so unworthy! She has finally acthepted me."

"Accepted you!" echoes Martin. It is as if a great stone were suddenly rolled away from a sepulchre, letting in floods of light and songs of singing birds. "Do you mean—"

Tiplilly does mean every word he says. Having been sent for, he visited Sophronia last night, and all their differences were made up. Even the day for their marriage is set! No wonder that he is beside himself with joy! No wonder that Martin expresses his congratulations in such gleeful mood that Tiplilly thinks him the most disinterested and enthusiastic friend in the world.

Martin cannot rest until he has imparted the news to Leviston.

This he does with a fidelity to circumstances which makes that misanthropic gentleman laugh — really and truly laugh — for the first time in some years.

"Perhaps you still think it was my duty to marry her?" the young man suggests, in his dryest manner.

"I only wonder how you could be such a fool as ever to fall in love with her," is Leviston's retort. "A girl who is so easily consoled! who can throw herself away on such a silly fop as Tiplilly! I thought you had more discernment."

"I shall have more in future," says Martin, red with shame.

More discernment he certainly has. But whence this growth of wisdom? What has tempered his youthful blood to such discretion? Let that night at the parsonage be remembered!

All this time the young man ceases not to mourn for Alice. In vain he has endeavored to trace out her destiny; and the conclusion has forced itself upon his mind, at last, that she has left the city with her father. He mourns for her, yet tries to console himself with the belief that she is happy. "In the country," he says, "poor Caleb is far from temptation; and she can breathe the summer air in all its sweetness, far from these hot city walls."

Alas for Alice! Martin is no prophet. No fresh breezes from the hills inspire her delicate frame with vernal life. Spring comes, the warm summer follows, and still she lives imprisoned in brick walls.

"In a little while, in a very little while, my child," says Caleb, "we will go out into the woods and fields you love so well. Ever since I learned that the man who cured your mother's eyes is dead, and that no one here can help you, my only wish has been to take you away from this hateful city. Mr. Peliqué will give me some money in a few days — then we will go."

"But not without letting my brother Martin know!" pleads Alice, in a voice of anguish.

"My child," her father answers, falsely, "you don't know how many times I have been to find him; but he is not often in town, I think; and when he is, he has not time to come and see you. He is writing great books, I hear, and is very proud and ambitious."

So Alice weeps, thinking her dearest friend has forgotten her. Her thoughts are of him continually. Sitting by her father as he works, she hears nothing of his talk with the entertaining one-eyed artist, Mr. Synders. When at the window of her own poor little room, where the winds of June, blowing over the city roofs, kiss her warm brow and agitate her curls, her inner sight is opened, and she sees fair visions of Martin far away. And in the silence of the night, when ghostly noises haunt the rooms of that old house, causing her to shudder with a vague, superstitious fear, she loves to cheat herself with the fancy that he is near, and will protect her from harm. That he has quite, quite forgotten her, O, she cannot, she cannot believe!

Her father is very tender and attentive to her, all this time; he is industrious and sober, for her sake; and often in the dusk of evening he takes her out to walk, and talks to her lovingly of the sweet home they will have in the country, when M. Peliqué has paid him a certain sum.

"Dear father, why do you take me by these close streets?" she inquires. "The air is so fresh, and I smell the trees and grass, up by the Common — why don't we walk that way, sometimes? Perhaps my brother Martin walks there now, and he may see us."

Caleb makes no satisfactory reply. Poor child! her father is somewhat strange yet; he has not quite rid himself of certain

queer notions his heated brain conceived when the frenzy of strong drink was on him. A strange fear haunts him yet of evil that pursues his child, and waits but for his watchful eye to be withdrawn to attack her in some shape of treachery. Of her friends he entertains a worse dread than of all the world beside; and Martin he dreads more than all.

So the young girl abides in M. Peliqué's house all through the spring months and the month of June. Everybody loves her even there. Mr. Bob Synders makes a companion of her, and tells her the longest stories — which she seldom hears. The woman who takes care of the rooms, and brings up her dinners from M. Peliqué's table, always has a kind word for poor blind Alice. All the lodgers in the house — and there are several — like her, and would make a great deal of her, if their attentions were pleasing to her father. Even M. Peliqué pets her, and talks to her in a mixed dialect of French and English, which she never pretends to understand. But all this is suddenly swept away by the ruthless hand of change. This frightful night, which follows so closely the last fair nights of June, appears ominous of what is to come. Alice sits at her chamber window, wondering at the unusual stir and noise in the city.

"What does it all mean?" she asks of her father. "Is everybody crazy? What has happened?"

"Nothing, my child. But something is going to happen. To-morrow is the Fourth of July."

"O, Independence day! I used to think that was pleasant,— did n't you? When mother dressed me all so nicely, and I walked with the other little girls in the Sunday-school celebration — that was very pretty. But this frightful noise!"

That frightful noise keeps her awake all night long. Bunches

of fire-crackers tear the air with their explosions directly under her window. And there are other sounds, as of pistols fired, — shouting, screaming, and drumming on tin-pans. No sleep till morn — nor even then. Poor Alice is quite worn out with wakefulness and irritation from the audible horrors of that night, and prays her father to take her from the city with the dawn.

"So I will, my darling!" answers Caleb. "Peliqué shall give me some money, and we will go out to some quiet place and spend the day."

Alice is so grateful! But M. Peliqué does not think favorably of the proposition.

"Eh, my frien'?" he says, fixing his sharp eyes on Caleb. "Money is it you want? Morbleu!" shrugging his shoulders, "you not remember our bargane, hein?"

"I do," answers Caleb, looking down, and speaking in a low tone. "I was afraid to trust myself with money; so I said, give me and my child our living only, and pay me what more I earn when we start for the country."

M. Peliqué is a great friend to Caleb, all at once. He is discreet, too, for his sake. With odd grimaces and violent gestures, he explains, in his peculiar dialect, the dangers attendant on fête-days to such excitable temperaments as Caleb's. He dares not trust him with money; besides, he must use all the money he has to pay for some pictures; and more than that, "*il n'a pas le sou*," — he has not a cent in the world, — which last assertion he demonstrates by turning an empty pocket-book inside out, striking it with his fingers, thrusting it open into Caleb's face, and shaking it over the floor, to show that there is nothing whatever to drop out. The excited Frenchman winds up by deploring his poverty, with an unintelligible story about a large family of starving children left behind him in "le Belge."

Alas for the disappointment; for Alice must remain in town, in the midst of all the heat and dust and noise; and Caleb is strangely restless. He cannot work. Since Peliqué told him of the dangers of the day, he has been troubled about something which makes his eyes glisten and his hands shake. And now, when the weary Alice lies in a deep sleep on her bed, he steals forth, and leaves the house with his genteel, one-eyed friend.

Mr. Synders is a free and liberal gentleman, who drinks his daily glasses, and loves to treat his friends. But he is pledged never to tempt poor Caleb Thorne; he keeps his private bottle locked up in the closet, and politely avoids drinking in his presence. But this is a great and glorious day, — an exception to all that go before it and all that come after it in the year.

"No pledges are binding on the Fourth of July," says Mr. Robert Synders. "It 's the duty of every true son of 'Mer'ca to be jolly and in'pen'nt on this glorious an'vers'y." Jolly and independent he himself is, beyond his wont; and he encourages Caleb to follow his example.

"Stop, stop!" mutters Caleb. "If you tempt me so — I — I can't resist. And I have sworn before my child, and before Heaven —"

"Nonsense!" cries the gracious Bob. "I hold the money, and I promis 't you shan't get drunk."

"You promise!" Caleb grasps him eagerly by the arm, and questions him with his burning eye. "Then I will drink one glass with you — only one."

"Say two, old boy! say two."

"Let it be two, then — or three — or four. But," says Caleb, palpitating, all on fire with the demoniac passion stirred within,

"when you see me bite the glass, as you fear God, snatch it from me! I am safe till I bite the glass. Then every dram is a legion of fiends poured down my throat."

Mr. Synders makes a ready promise; and so the two go out at sundown, to celebrate the glorious Fourth; as too many celebrate it, alas! And, like too many others, they return home, late at night, bereft of reason, brutalized by drink. At the door they pause, and Mr. Robert Synders seats himself heavily on the threshold, declaring that he is mightily, merrily, musically, mystically, inimitably and altogether drunk. It requires a great deal of exertion to deliver himself of this sentiment, word by word, thickly pronounced; and, the task being at length accomplished, he compliments Caleb on his strong head. In truth, their money is all spent, and Caleb has not yet arrived at the perilous point of biting the glass. So Bob proposes that, himself being incapacitated for ascending stairs, his friend should take a key he produces after much fumbling in his pocket, go up to the work-room, unlock the closet, find a certain bottle on a certain shelf, and bring it down.

Readily acceding to the proposition, Caleb ascends the stairs, groping in the dark, with great difficulty. But all too easily he finds the fatal closet, and succeeds in opening the door. He has lighted a lamp, and now, by its ghastly rays, he discovers several bottles on the shelves. Having forgotten Mr. Synders' description of the true bottle, he commences an examination of their contents, and, in his eagerness, overturns with his shaking hand one from which he has removed the cork. Instantly the unmistakable odor of camphene fills the room. He smells it, feels the danger, and sees, as by a lightning ray of reason, the horrors of an explosion, — thinks of Alice sleeping in the room above, —

all in an instant of time. Yet, in his mind's bewildered state, he thinks only of advancing the lamp, to see by the light thereof what mischief has been done! Fatal error! There is a flash, a report, a burst of flame; and Caleb, thrown backward, lies stunned and scorched upon the blazing floor.

XXVI.

THE WANDERERS.

EVISTON the misanthrope was alarmed at the change which had come over Martin. He saw him shun society, and go wandering up and down in solitary mood, too much after his own sad fashion to merit his approval. And, with the very best intentions, he exerted himself to be of service in his case. But of the workings of that finer spirit he knew nothing; he was insensible to the voice of conscience speaking ever in Martin's soul, and to the subtle chains that vexed his impatient feet. So that his best counsel sounded cold, and hard, and out of place, to his friend's sensitive ears.

One evening — it was this same fourth of July — he saw him seek the loneliest streets for his walk, and followed him, taking his arm. Martin was not glad to be thus interrupted in his meditations; but, resigning himself as best he could, he entered into conversation with his self-appointed mentor.

"I tell you this will never do," said George, in his harsh way. "You are making a fool of yourself. If you are n't careful, you 'll find yourself a subject for the insane asylum, some fine morning."

"I certainly should be such a subject soon, if two or three independence days came together, and if I were obliged to live through their din and dust in Boston."

"Come, you need n't try to get off so; I am in earnest."

"My dear Leviston," replied Martin, with feeling, "I know you are; and I thank you; but you don't know how much you pain me. It 's very irritating to be threatened with a strait-jacket, even by a friend. Perhaps I shall have one, but you will not prevent the catastrophe in this way."

"Well, well. Maybe I was wrong. But I want to see you out of this state."

"This state — I would have gone out of it last week, if the means of getting out had not been wanting. I think Rhode Island or Vermont would be far preferable, — any state, in fact, but Massachusetts."

"Come, come! I am in no mood for joking."

"Neither am I, dear Leviston. But when you vex me with your harsh words, I must either be facetious or angry."

"You think I don't understand you. Tell me, then, what is the matter."

"If you insist on explanations, I will try to speak. This problem of existence troubles me. I don't know why I am here, with these longings unsatisfied, with these clouds of passion which shut out the pure light of heaven, with these hopes which never blossom into fulfilment."

"Where is all your fine philosophy, my friend?" demanded

Leviston. "You talked very differently when you came home from that mad jaunt into the country last winter. What faith you had then! what reliance on the spirit within you! But it is well; it was necessary that you should learn this lesson, — that, spite of philosophy, human nature is human nature still. What do all your dreams of a better life amount to? So much!" said Leviston, snapping his fingers.

Martin was silent, and his friend heard him sigh.

"Another thing — speaking of human nature; don't trust yourself too far; for, if you do, you'll get deceived. You are not half as wise and strong as you flatter yourself that you are. Several times I have been going to warn you against committing yourself with that Miss Murray, out there near Summer Hill."

"Good Heavens!" interrupted Martin, incensed, "do you think I need watching over like a child? Am I a fool?"

"In some things you are — if I may be plain with you. Last month, when Miss Murray was in town, you could think of nothing else but her; and during the three weeks she staid you did act as much like a fool as a fellow of your natural abilities could do conveniently. She was silly enough to encourage you, and so you ran after her day and night — until, I have no doubt, her friends here were heartily glad when her visit was concluded."

"If anybody but you said this," interposed Martin, with spirit, "I should certainly knock him down. But you don't know what you say."

"Yes, I do. And I know you better than you know yourself. You need some friend to look after you a little. You are making love to this Miss Murray, and winning her affections, — just as

you conducted yourself with Miss Dabney, — to find, in the end, that she is another Sophronia, not worth winning."

"She! another Sophronia!"

"O, you think her perfection, of course! There 's too much romance in your head yet. You don't know what you want. Now, take a friend's advice. Stop where you are. Don't go and play the same part over again that you played with Sophronia; if you do —"

Stung to the quick, Martin abruptly shook off his friendly adviser, and left him without a word. Leviston called to him, but, making no answer, he hastened up the street, and rushed into the thickest of the throng that flocked to the Common to see the fireworks. He witnessed the exhibition — saw the revolving wheels of fire, and rockets dropping stars; the blazing ships, and eagles, and Washington, of dazzling many-colored flames; beheld the picturesque effect of the bright lights shining over a mighty concourse of people, under the cloudy sky of night; heard the tumultuous applause, mingled with the crying of innumerable babies in the press; and departed, when all was over, borne along by the resistless river of human life, that poured out, swaying and heaving, into the streets. Still his mind was absent. On he went, insensible alike to the smell of powder that filled the air, the deafening explosions of bunches of crackers on the pavements, the cries of fire, and the ringing of bells. Before he was aware, he found himself in a confused crowd before a building, the front windows of which, in the third story, poured forth volumes of smoke and flame.

"Hello, Mr. Mer'vale!" cried a well-known voice.

"Ha, Cheesy! what 's the news to-night?"

"I 'm glad you 're here!" exclaimed the excited Cheesy.

"They say there 's a blind girl up in the chamber where the fire is."

"A blind girl! Who says so?" Martin rushed through the crowd towards the door, followed by Cheesy. "Where are the firemen? why don't they bring her down?" He ran against M. Peliqué, who was coming out of the house with an arm-full of pictures. "Where is the blind girl, sir? Is there one?" he demanded, seizing the Frenchman in his excitement.

"Dse leetle Alice?" ejaculated M. Peliqué."

"Is she up there?" rang out the voice of Martin.

"Away up. It come fire and smoke between. Dse firemen will take her from dse window on dse laddare."

Martin had no thought of waiting for the firemen, who were but just arriving on the spot. He bounded into the hall, and sprang blindly up the stairway, followed by Cheesy.

"Button your coat, and turn up your collar!" cried the latter, as they made the ascent.

Martin acted upon the advice, and climbed higher still, until he could hear the roaring of the flames, and feel the stifling smoke roll over him.

"I guess I dasn't go no fu'ther!" gasped Cheesy

"Give me your coat!" shouted Martin.

Cheesy stripped off his jacket, and thrust it into his friend's hands; then fled, panic-stricken, from the scene. Martin whipped the garment around his face, and rushed athwart a flood of flame that poured from the burning apartments into the third landing. On the stairs above, he paused amid the dense smoke, in the hope that the blind girl's cries would guide him to the room. No cries reached his ear, however; and he was struggling up farther, in uncertainty, when he tumbled over a body on the stairs.

"Caleb Thorne!" he cried, lifting up the form of a man.

"No, 't an't Caleb; it 's Bob Synders," articulated a choked voice. "But don't mind me. Save Alice Thorne! She 's in the front attic. I got up so far after her, but I 'm pretty drunk, and hang me if I can go any further."

"But you will perish here, poor fellow!"

And Martin dragged the brave Robert through the fire, across the landing, and left him on the flight of stairs below.

"Save — save — save Caleb, too, if you can!" shouted Mr. Synders, indistinctly, as he descended, sliding and tumbling, towards the lower floors.

The conflagration was increasing with frightful rapidity. One entire portion of the landing seemed a sheet of fire, and the flames darted up towards the attics over the crackling stairs. But now the voice of Alice, crying wildly for help, came to Martin's ear, inspiring him with fresh courage and new strength. How the feat was accomplished he himself could not have told; but a minute later he had the blind girl in his arms, with Cheesy's jacket wrapped about her face and bosom, bearing her downward through the fire. The danger was passed, and with his burnt hands he removed the garment which was smothering her in its close folds.

"My brother Martin!" cried Alice, clinging to him with strange energy.

"My dear child! don't be frightened; you are safe now."

"But what has happened? I awoke just now — the room was full of smoke, and, when I opened the door, I heard such horrid noises, and felt such a dreadful blaze! Is the house burning up?"

"The house is burning, sure enough. But don't tremble so, my poor girl! You are out of danger."

"And you brought me out! O, my dear, dear brother! But my father — where is he? He sat by me when I fell asleep. I had n't gone to bed. I had only just lain down, with my clothes on, — but I must have slept so sound! I don't know where he can have gone. But, if he had been in the building, he would have brought me out, would n't he?'

"But he is in the building!" exclaimed Robert Synders, staggering to his feet as Martin passed through the hall with his burden. "He left me here just before the fire, and went up into the very room where it broke out. He 'd been drinking, and I should n't wonder if he set it."

"O, my father — my father!" cried Alice, in piteous accents. "Save him! — save him! Leave me here, and save my father!"

"My child, if human arm can save him, he shall be saved! See to her, Cheesy!" cried Martin to the excited youth. "Don't let her go from your sight an instant."

He hastily put down his burden, and returned, heated, scorched and half-stifled as he was, into the midst of the burning building. But this time he was not alone. Two firemen mounted the stairs by his side. It was well, perhaps; for the attics were now all aflame, and in his impetuosity he might have risked his life in the tide of fire that rolled up the stairs, had he not been restrained. Hose-pipes were now beginning to pour streams of water upon the conflagration from without and from within, and, convinced that no Caleb Thorne was there, he descended to the spot where he had left his charge. The hall, and a space for some yards in front of the dwelling, were cleared, and Alice was nowhere to be seen. At length his eyes fell upon Cheesy, hurrying to and fro in the crowd.

"Have you seen her?" asked the boy, eagerly, as Martin struck his shoulder.

"Alice — where is she?" demanded Martin.

"I 'm looking for her," replied Cheesy, in alarm.

"But I told you to take care of her."

"I know it; but I could n't help it. I got her a place to set down on the door-steps opposite, and stood looking at the firemen, when I see Uncle Joe Kevill, and run to speak to him; but he got into the crowd, and I could n't find him, and when I went back to the door-step she was gone; and I can't find nothing of her sence."

Quelling a certain exasperation of feeling that swelled up in his heart against Cheesy, Martin, alarmed for the safety of the child, joined him in the search. By the light of the blazing windows, which cast a red glare on the crowd, they looked on all sides, making hasty inquiries here and there, but all in vain.

"I bet," said Cheesy, "'t the minute I le' go on her to ketch Uncle Joe, she started to foller you up them stairs; 'cause she kep' twisting her hands and moaning about her father, all the while he was gone. If she did, she 's most likely got knocked down by the folks fetchin' out the things; or mebby her clo'es ketched afire — should n't wonder at all, should you?"

"Cheesy! Cheesy! how could you leave her at such a time?" was the sole reply forced from Martin's overcharged heart.

Meanwhile the subject of all his trouble is making her way from the fire as fast as her little feet can carry her. Not alone: the form of a man by her side appears, hurrying her along.

"Hush! don't cry, my child!" says Caleb — for it is he. "We are safe — let the old house burn!"

"You did not set the fire, did you, father? O, tell me you did not set it!"

"Who put such a thought into your head?

"Don't be angry; don't speak so," pleads the trembling girl. "I was sure you did not set it; and Mr. Synders had been drinking, or he would not have said so."

Caleb answers not, but hurries on, as if in fear.

"We must leave the city at once, my child," he mutters. "We will leave it behind us forever now."

"But my brother Martin — he brought me out of the fire, and went back for you. I have not even thanked him yet. Do — do let me speak with him once more!"

"Went back for me, did he? There was no need. I could take care of myself."

"But me — he brought me down. I should have burnt up, if it had not been for him."

"No, I would have saved you, if death itself had held me back!" articulated Caleb. "I should have been the first to reach you," he adds, "but I did n't know very well what had happened when I scrambled out of the room where the camphene exploded; and when I quite came to myself, I found I had fallen down the back stairs."

"O, I am so glad you got away! But why do you hurry me off so? Can't I just speak to my brother Martin?"

Twenty times the poor child asks the question, with every argument her tremulous little heart can devise.

But Caleb is inexorable. Through the night they fly. The noise of crackers exploding becomes less frequent; reports of rushing rockets die away in the distance; and the hum of the city grows far-off and faint. Alice smells the fragrance of gardens and fields, and the stony pave has given place at length to the green turf and dusty road. Still no pause. Spurred by conscience and fear, the guilty Caleb makes all haste to lose him-

self and child in the country solitude. And when her weary feet refuse to bear her further, he turns aside into a lonely wood, and, seating himself upon the ground, holds her while she sleeps. How still and solemn the night! The mournful notes of a few sad insects, the fitful cries of a shrill-voiced whippoorwill, and the babbling of a brook in the gloom, seem but to add intensity to the silence. Who can divine the thoughts of the remorseful Caleb, as he listens? Till long past midnight he watches over his child; then, reclining his heavy head against a tree-trunk, falls into a troubled slumber. The gnashing of his teeth in sleep awakens Alice. She starts up in affright. She cannot see the dim hill-sides, and dark hollows, and ghostly shapes of trees, and the star-shine gleaming through the leafage overhead; but the smell of the wood, and the singing of the brook near by, and the feel of the ground on which she lays her intelligent hand, recall to mind the strange night-journey, and the solemn bed in the grove.

Caleb is awake at dawn, and they travel some miles in the cool of the day. In the soft-bedded dust of the wagon-track, or on the dewy road-side, the blind girl walks silently by her father's side. The mellow-piping robins, the wild-chattering bobolinks, and the lazy-cackling hens, proclaim the reign of the golden midsummer days, and each well-remembered note touches the heart of Alice with an indefinable sweet sadness. Ah, many a summer morning, gone down into the sepulchred past, finds dreamy resurrection in her memory now, and floods her soul with its soft purple light. The fragrance of the new-mown meadows, stealing upon her sense, brings up Sabbath-recollections, the sweetest and best. The brook-like music of rustling leaves transports her to the delicious shadows of the woodland retreat, where she used to sit by her mother's side, and listen to her quiet talk.

The shaking of the willow boughs reminds her of that mother's grave. What wonder that her sightless blue eyes overflow with tears!

"Dear father," she says, "let us go back now to our dear home in the country. The old house, and the orchard, and the pretty grove, and the corner of the yard where the grass was so deep, and the bees used to hum so, all day long, around their hives, — my heart yearns for them; I did not know how well I loved them before!"

"I will see what can be done," answers the dark-browed Caleb. "But you know that our home is ours no longer, my poor child!"

"I know it. But the people who live there — they will let us sit in the orchard, and walk through the grass where the bee-hives are, and perhaps sleep one night in the house, won't they? O dear! O dear!" murmurs Alice, weeping; "I don't know what makes me cry; but I can't help it."

They cross a bridge, and, as the blind girl feels the planks beneath her feet, and hears the liquid rippling of a stream spilled over its shallow bed of stones, she pauses, with a smile of subdued rapture, like one listening to catch the faint notes of music borne from far.

"Here is a creek like ours at home, isn't it?"

"Somewhat like," answers the down-looking Caleb.

"And does it wind about in the meadow, and sometimes lie like glass under clumps of willows, with the blue sky and the clouds away down in it, like another world below!"

"Just so," says Caleb, moodily.

"And in some places there are tall green flags along the edges, and lilies afloat; and the banks overhang the stream just by the

little bend on the right, and make it look so cool, and still, and soft, in the shadow! I can see it all! Let us rest here; and I will go down and put my feet in the water, where it slips over these smooth stones."

The weather continues fine, and the travellers, resting often, get over a good deal of ground before night. Wherever they apply for food, or shelter, or drink, they are hospitably received; and, at the approach of evening, a good woman, at the door of a farm-house, invites them to come into the yard, and gives them new milk to drink, and bread and berries to eat. They spend the night there; and on the following day they journey the same, or rather wander, for Caleb has no fixed course in view, but seems to be directed hither and thither by chance. By this chance, as it were, he finds himself, towards evening, picking berries for Alice on a rough hill-side, while she sits in the shadow of a great elm, listening to the splash of a streamlet that falls over a near ledge of rocks. And by the same chance — if there be any such thing as chance in this wondrous world, whose coat of many colors is composed, web and woof, of subtle threads of divine law — he at length emerges from a maze of bushes, and stands face to face with a female, who also appears to be picking berries. She is pale, and restless-looking, and her dark eye flashes on Caleb suspiciously, — so, at least, he thinks.

"I beg your pardon, if this is private ground," he says. "I was gathering a few berries for my little girl."

"If it is private ground, it 's none of mine," answers the woman. "I am a stranger here." She takes a few quick steps towards the road, then turns back. "Where is your little girl? As I have only myself to pick berries for, she shall have some of mine."

Caleb gives her cold thanks, and, with looks somewhat forbidding, walks towards the elm-tree by the ledge.

ding, walks towards the elm-tree by the ledge.

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The woman follows, however, and, kneeling down upon the grass by Alice, opens her handkerchief of berries.

"Help yourself; I have eaten all I wish," she says, abruptly, but yet kindly.

"What is it?" timidly asks the blind girl, extending her hand gropingly.

"Why don't you look and see?"

"She is blind," says Caleb, fixing his haggard eye on the woman's face.

He has seen before that she is young, and might be handsome, with her finely-moulded features and silken hair, but for the pallor of her face, her worn and wasted looks, and the unnatural fire that burns in her large brown eyes. And now he sees her start strangely, and, with a certain wildness of manner, hasten down the slope.

"Did I offend her?" asks the blind girl.

"No; I think she must be crazy," replies her father, thoughtfully. "There, she 's coming back."

"I forgot to leave my berries," observes the strange woman, in a tremulous voice, emptying the contents of her handkerchief into the blind girl's lap. "Poor child! — I am sorry you are blind! Are you travelling far?"

She adds a sympathetic word or two, then turns again to go; but hesitates still, and, finally, throwing herself on the ground by the side of Alice, bursts into tears. The blind girl smooths the wet cheek with her tender hand, and presses the bowed head to her loving breast. Without a word; yet she weeps too, and the woman sees her weep.

"God bless you!" says the latter, choking back her sobs, and rising to her feet. "These are the first tears I have shed for

weeks. I owe them to you. They have burned here," — she presses her thin temples, — "but they would not fall. I don't know what it is, but something in you has drawn them out, and I shall be better for it. God bless you again and again, my pure little angel!"

She kisses the hands of Alice, then her brow, — "I am not worthy to kiss your mouth!" she says, — while Caleb looks on darkly, breathing hard.

"Let me kiss *you*," murmurs Alice, putting up her sweet lips.

As they touch those of the stranger, the hot tears rain again, and the unrestrained sobs burst forth.

"What does all this mean?" demands Caleb, anxious and trembling.

"I cannot tell," responds the weeper, throwing back the masses of her loosened hair. "I have sinned, I have suffered, and the sight of this pure one melts me — that is all I know."

This passion of repentance touches Caleb. He calls the woman sister, clasps her hand, and, with his glassy eyes all filmed with tears, confesses his own sin and sorrow. And so they sit and talk until the shadow of a great hill creeps across the valley, and rises like a tide upon the sunshine of another great hill beyond; then, in the cool of evening, they descend the slope to the road.

"Which way do you travel?" Caleb asks.

"I do not know. An hour ago I could have told, but now" — the speaker looks about her wildly — "all things seem changed. O, I am bound upon a mad, mad errand!" she adds quickly. "The thought of it fills me again like fire! I cannot abandon it, if I would. This way I go," she says, with sharp decision. "And you?"

"Any way, so that it but leads from the city," Caleb responds. "If it suits you, we will travel together."

By way of reply, she takes the blind girl's hand, and they walk on until the shadow of the hills has deepened into dusk, and the dusk verges on toward darkness, revealing one by one the silver stars. And when the stars have thickened in the overarching blue, and their first faint light has blushed into lustrous gold, the wanderers lie under a farm-house roof. Heaven send them peaceful sleep!

Another refulgent morning, dewy, and not overwarm; and while the grass still glistens, the travellers are once more upon the road.

"You are very feeble," Caleb observes to the strange woman, in a tone of compassion, as they stop early to rest by the roadside. "I wonder how you bear up to travel in this way."

"I can't but wonder myself," she answers, hiding her face in her hands. "Sometimes I feel that I can go no further. And yesterday, as I came by a pond, I thought I would walk out in it a little ways, and get down upon my face in the still water, and lie there till some one came and found me asleep forever! — O, it would have been so sweet, that rest! But something drove me away, — and that something tells me now I must go on. A little further, and my journey will be finished."

At noon she for the last time makes inquiries concerning the place towards which her footsteps tend. It is at the door of a sunny farm-house, and a gentle-faced woman points out to her a steeple that overlooks the foliage of a grove. She starts, breathes quick, and the small hectic spot her pale cheek shows deepens in color, as, with visible agitation, she clutches at the woman's sleeve, and puts an eager question in a low tone of voice.

"O, yes," her informant answers, not without a look of surprise; "I can show you the house from the garden-gate. But

you had better come in and rest, and eat something, before you go so far."

"No, no!" replies the wanderer, with a passionate gesture, moving away. She pauses, and, designating Caleb and his child, who stand waiting for her in the road, remarks that if her companions can find rest there until her return, she will be grateful. She of the gentle face smiles sweet consent. And now, while their new acquaintance walks rapidly away, Caleb and blind Alice pass through the clover-scented yard, and enter the cottage door.

"My poor little girl!" said their hostess, with warm sympathy, "lie down upon this lounge. You look tired. How far have you travelled, sir?"

Caleb replied from Boston; and added that he had come out in search of some light work to do, and a home for his blind child.

"Blind? How sad!" exclaimed the woman, kissing her blue eyes. "There, you can sleep now, if you will," — placing her fair young head upon a pillow, — "and when you have rested, you shall have some dinner."

"I don't care for dinner; I don't feel like sleeping," was the child's soft reply. "Only let me lie so. You make me very happy. O, father!" she continued, in a whisper, to Caleb, "I can feel her heart warm me! It seems as if we had found a home, at last."

"Have you been always blind?" the kind woman inquired.

"Only since I was nine years old, ma'am."

"And how old are you now, my dear?"

"I shall be thirteen in September."

"And your name?"

She put these questions in no idle mood; her interest in the

girl was evidently strong and deep; and when, in answer to her last inquiry, the name of "Alice Thorne" was breathed, her countenance lighted up with lively emotion.

"I think I have heard of you before, dear Alice."

"Have you?"

"Yes, dear. A young man was here from Boston —"

"Was it Martin? — was it my brother Martin?" cried Alice, eagerly.

"Yes, it was Martin; and he told me all about you, my poor girl."

"O! do you know where he is? And will you send for him to come and see me?"

"I know where he is, and he shall be sent for, and you shall stay till he comes," replied Martha Doane.

Her full heart overflowed through her eyes. Alice wept too, pressing to her lips the kind hand that smoothed her brow; while Caleb Thorne looked on bewildered, and passed his palm twice or thrice across his dimmed eyesight, clearing it of mist, before he appeared at all able to determine whether he was awake or dreaming.

XXVII.

CLARA AND MARTHA.

ON a rustic bench by the wayside, at the foot of Summer Hill, the late companion of Caleb and Alice sat her down to rest. The pallor of her face had deepened to an almost deathly hue, and the small hectic spot on either cheek burned a still more fiery scarlet, as she paused there to gather breath, and to rally all her faculties for the task before her.

"My God!" she moaned, at length, pressing her temples. "This is madness! Why am I here? What shall I do? Fool! fool!"

The strong resolution that had so long stayed her ebbing energies, like a dam across a stream, seemed suddenly to have given way before the strain and pressure of the crisis that had come. She looked furtively around, to assure herself that she was unobserved, then started from her seat, and with her head bowed down, as if in fear and shame, set out to fly. But at that moment, a clatter of horses' hoofs startled her, and, glancing down the road, she saw a gentleman and lady galloping up tow-

ards Summer Hill. Uttering a suppressed cry, and clasping a hand upon her heart, as if a sharp pain had pierced her, she shrank back, and stood, palpitating and breathless, by the wall, while the beautiful Louise Merrivale dashed past her, accompanied by the gallant Mr. Milburn.

Again her aspect changed. She stood erect like a queen. There was desperation in her step, as she followed the equestrians up the hill; and the wilful curving of her lip, and the intense light enkindled in her eye, told that now she was strong — that neither fear, nor shame, nor death itself, should turn her from her purpose.

The riders had disappeared before she reached the house; but Mr. Milburn, who had remarked her in the road, saw her again from a window as she came up the avenue, and frowned black as night upon her approach.

Perhaps the look he gave her occasioned that wild start, as she was about to mount the piazza steps; but not even his frown could deter her then: gathering her womanhood about her like a garment, she walked unshrinkingly up to the door and rang.

"Who can that strange creature be?" murmured Louise, holding her riding hat in her hand.

The gentleman made some careless reply, as he selected a choice cigar from an elegant case, and wet it with his lips.

"Why, what is the matter?" asked Louise.

"Matter? with me?" cried Mr. Milburn, laughing.

"I never saw you look so pale in my life. Isn't he pale, mother?"

"I think he is very red," replied Mrs. Merrivale, entering the room just in time to see the fire come into his face. "The ride — or something else — has given him a fine color."

"It may be the ride — it may be the proximity of your daughter's radiant countenance," observed the gallant Theodore.

A person to see Miss Merrivale was at that moment announced.

"It 's that woman! What can she want with me?"

"Show her in, and we 'll find out," said Mr. Milburn; "and I 'll postpone smoking till after dinner."

He spoke lightly, but there was a meaning in his tone, and in his cool, determined look, which did not escape the eye of Louise.

"It can't be for you," remarked Mrs. Merrivale, sweeping from the room in her energetic way. "I think I know who it is. It is a woman who always says *Miss* for *Missis*."

Of course, she was mistaken in the visitor. Miss Merrivale, not Mrs. Merrivale, was in reality called for. But the mother was a person who never scrupled to act in her daughter's place, when it suited her purpose to do so; and now, something in the visitor s manner awakening her curiosity, she straightway conducted her to her own chamber.

"Miss Merrivale is engaged at present. Perhaps you can do your errand to me."

"Are you her mother?"

Receiving an affirmative reply, the visitor searched her face with a keen glance, then cast her restless eyes upon the floor. With all her selfishness, and pride, and will, Mrs. Merrivale possessed a certain hearty benevolence, which answered readily to the appeals of the distressed. Her countenance betrayed that weakness — as the colonel termed it; the visitor saw it with her woman's intuitive sight, and the discovery determined her to treat with the mother, before disclosing her business to the daughter.

"I called," said she, hesitatingly, after a deep breath — "I

called — to speak with you about — " those restless eyes wandered about the floor, then suddenly flashed full upon Mrs. Merrivale — " about your husband."

" About my husband ! "

" He met with an accident not long since."

" Last winter," returned Mrs. Merrivale, eying her visitor with increasing interest. " He received dangerous injuries in a manner which still remains a mystery."

" That mystery I have come to clear up."

" How ? You know who the assailant was —'

" Yes, and what set him on," said the visitor, no longer hesitating, but swayed by the spirit of her purpose ; and with her wan face and hectic cheek she met the almost masculine, hard, scrutinizing gaze of the suspicious woman with whom she had to deal. " It is a long story," she went on, " but I will make it brief. It is a story of sorrow and wrong, but I will tell it without a tear. It is a story which lays open a wounded heart, and shows the consuming fire in one forsaken soul, — but I will keep nothing back."

The passion with which she spoke alarmed even the strong wife of Colonel Merrivale. But she said " go on," and listened calmly.

Then came the story, poured out in language heated, impassioned, and often incoherent, as remembered griefs shook the speaker's reason ; it was of a girlish heart deceived by falsest vows, — won from the peace of a virtuous home by smooth utterances of a lying tongue, — consumed by passion which it took for love, — then basely cast aside, and trampled upon, and blown to the winds of fortune, like the ashes of a cigar ! An old story, but one too common, alas ! and one which will be repeated too

often and too often, as long as there is meanness and selfishness in man, and love and trust in woman. So much Mrs. Merrivale takes occasion to observe, as her visitor pauses in the vehemence of her narrative to gather strength for its conclusion.

"But of one thing I am guiltless," she resumed. "I fled from the pit into which he would have thrust me, when he found me in his way. I might not now be the wretchedly clad, half-starved creature that I am, — obliged to make this journey on foot, from poverty, — but that I proved faithful to that unfaithful man — to my true love for him, — faithful, you may say, to my one crime and error."

"You are to be commended for that," said Mrs. Merrivale, approvingly. "I will have your case looked into," — she is an active member of a benevolent society, and this is her stereotyped phrase, — "and we will see what can be done for you. But what has all this to do with Colonel Merrivale?"

"I told you of one who loved me before my folly: his was a sincere love, — for slighting that alone I deserve my punishment. But after I had become what I am, another loved me — loves me to this day — would give his life, I do believe, to save mine, with all my unworthiness. I have tried to escape from him, but he followed me when I came from Philadelphia," — at that word Mrs. Merrivale starts, — "and he has persecuted me ever since. I will not speak his name, but it was this last who stabbed your husband."

Mrs. Merrivale is still mystified. Her curiosity has become irritating, painful, and she demands an instant explanation.

"He thought to win my love by killing the man that wronged me. In the dark he mistook Colonel Merrivale for Mr. Milburn."

What an expression came into Mrs. Merrivale's face! She walked swiftly to the door, then back, and finally seated herself again opposite her visitor. But now the latter quailed before her imperious eye. Her story told, her task accomplished, she had no more strength to bear her up. Upon the floor, before the mother of Louise, she fell prostrate, covering her face with her hands.

"Forgive me! — pity me!" she sobbed. "It may be jealousy in part that brought me here — for I know my love has been a bad, selfish love, or it would not have left me this wreck. But I would not injure him. I have no feeling of revenge for all my wrongs. When that other man came to me and said, 'I have killed the villain!' he almost killed *me* with his words. But your daughter — I believe she is innocent and good, and — and I think she should know what this man is. They say she will marry him; but she cannot marry him, I am sure, when she knows my history, — she cannot take what is as much mine, by every law of justice and right, as if a thousand priests had pronounced us man and wife."

"Hush, hush! you will be overheard."

"I may be. He is in this house, and he may hear me. I do not care to have him; I would not choose that he should ever hear my voice or see my face again. One night — it was the stormiest night we had last winter — I walked through the streets of Boston to see him — only to catch a glimpse of him, if I could, as he came out of his hotel, — for I had just heard that he was still alive, after I had thought him dead. I watched for him until I had nearly perished, and when he came out, — I could n't help speaking to him, — he had been so good to me once, — but when he saw me, he pushed me from him, — his hand struck me,

— and he cursed me, — his lips cursed me, that once made me believe he loved me! Do you think, after that, I would care to have him hear my voice? Yet I could tell him of this to his face, if you wish it!"

The speaker arose with a pitiful ghost of pride and resentment in her aspect, as if she judged from the lady's mien that it would indeed be desirable to try her truthfulness by that ordeal. But Mrs. Merrivale said there was no occasion for the test; and, adding a few words of encouragement, rather too formal to come from the heart, she slipped a sum of money into her hands, and bade her go her ways, and forget the man who had wronged her.

Ah! then the pride and resentment in Clara Grayle's aspect appeared something more than a pitiful ghost of such! The air with which she flung the insult from her, and put her foot upon it, and flashed her scornful eyes upon the lady, might have become a queen. But in a moment it was over, and her passion was followed by a flood of tears.

"I will go! — I will not trouble you or him again," she sobbed in her distress, — "I can do without a bribe. Only let me see her first — your daughter — his chosen bride. I know that she is more beautiful than I ever was — but that will not make me feel bad. He loves her, I suppose — but I don't care much now. Only don't let her love him as I loved him! I don't know why, but it will be a satisfaction for me to see her; I would bless her, and wish her happiness, and pray God that in all her life it may not be given her to taste one such cup of bitterness as I drink every hour of my days! Can I see her?"

What an absurd request! It makes the lady smile. As if she were not altogether too tender of her darling to permit an insane creature like her to pain her only by the sight of such distress!

But when that insane creature has been sent away, the lady will herself do what she could by no means suffer in another. Whence this strange delight she feels in torturing the heart of her she loves so jealously? Unhappy Louise! she knows, when called to her mother's chamber, that the rack is prepared; and she comes scowling, — yea, scowling is the word, radiant as that fair face was a half-hour since, — to the dreaded inquisition.

"What is it now?" she demands, impatiently. "I see the venom in your mouth. Don't hesitate, but spit it out."

"What coarse language for a young lady to use!"

"Any more refined would not suit the sentiment, dear mother. I mean venom, and I mean — spit it out."

With a hard laugh she throws herself upon the chair poor Clara occupied a minute since, and drums with her foot, while Mrs. Merrivale stands looking down upon her with eyes darting fire.

"You are very grateful to me for what I do for you always!" said the latter. "But I am used to your temper."

"And I am used to yours — a little too well used to it to be a remarkably amiable child. But what wonderful work for my good is your benevolence planning now?"

"I should like to know," Mrs. Merrivale resumed, after a pause, "if you have the remotest idea what sort of a man you are going to marry?"

"There it is again! Mr. Milburn, poor fellow, has to take it! I hope he will survive all these terrible attacks. Ever since I began to like him a little, and concluded to have him, — it was a match of your own contriving too, and you know it, — you have grown so jealous and hateful towards him, that I have been afraid you would poison his coffee."

"A match of my contriving! I never wanted you to have him!"

"What a woman! Why, you almost teased my life out of me, because I did n't encourage him when he first began to come here."

"It is no such thing. I never wished you to encourage him. I only desired that you should treat him civilly. When you take a dislike you are the most uncivil creature in the world."

"Present company excepted, dear mother! But what is it now about Mr. Milburn?"

Mrs. Merrivale answered by repeating the story of Clara Grayle. Louise became absorbed in it; all her generous feelings and womanly sympathies were aroused; her indignation flamed up; and before her mother was aware, she had conjured a spirit too mighty for her magic, and not easy of exorcism. Louise could not find words to express her abomination of that act of which her betrothed was guilty; and rather than marry him, she declared that she would destroy herself.

"There! — don't be foolish," cried her mother, alarmed.

"Foolish? Would you have me tolerate such heartlessness? It will be just like you to take his part, now that you have turned me against him."

"I would have you consider what you do."

"And marry him!" ejaculated Louise.

"Do as you please about that. Matters have proceeded so far that it will be impossible to break up the match without occasioning a world of scandal. Besides, reflect that Mr. Milburn is but a fair specimen of men in general. If you are ever to marry, I don't know that you can do better."

"O, what a woman you are! I do believe you are insane.

Just now you painted him black as Satan — and one would have thought that, if you had any heart, you would sooner bury a daughter than give her to such a man. Now — you disgust me!"

And, in her passion, the fair fingers of that fair young girl seized the lace collar that encircled her delicate white neck, and rending it, scattered the fragments right and left upon the floor. Then, before her mother could stop her, she had literally torn from the room; and a minute later, she stood, flushed and trembling, in presence of her self-possessed and smiling Theodore.

Mrs. Merrivale sent in haste for her husband. He had not yet quite recovered from his injuries, and, on entering the chamber, he sat down, and breathed deeply, as if exhausted by the exertion.

"Come," said he, wiping the sweat from his brow, "if you have anything sweet for me, produce it; and I will go back to my room — a great deal cooler place than this, my dear."

He spoke with that mixture of jest and bitter earnest with which it was his custom to address his wife, and yawned, waiting for her answer. He had not long to wait; and he ceased yawning when informed touching the facts that had so inflamed his daughter against Mr. Milburn.

"The rascal!" muttered the colonel. "I was confident, at the first, that he was at the bottom of that confounded stabbing affair. Heaven forgive me, but I at one time more than half believed he used the knife on me himself. So it appears these pleasant cuts belonged by right to him! A sweet reflection! as if I had not sins enough of my own to answer for, but I must be sacrificed for my friends. What is to be done about it? It will go hard with poor Louise."

"You must talk with her, and try to bring her to her reason."

"Do you mean — reconcile her to Theodore?"

"Why not?" asked Mrs. Merrivale.

"By heaven! but woman is a paradox!" exclaimed the colonel. "I thought you would put daggers between them. Do you reflect there has been a parallel case to theirs? Has your own experience taught you no feeling of compassion for your child? Are you determined to cut out her life after the pattern of your own? Then I have nothing to say; I am the last person that can throw a stone at Theodore. But as for Louise — talk to her yourself. 'T would go against my conscience to attempt to influence her — unless it were to warn her against taking her mother for an example."

By this time Clara had found her way back to the cottage where she left her companions. How she arrived there she could never tell. Long after, she had a dim remembrance of refusing, a second time, Mrs. Merrivale's money; of hurrying from the house; of meeting a man, walking leisurely up and down the avenue, smoking; of falling down sick and dizzy at his feet, at the recognition; of clinging to him with wild words — of being repulsed, and cursed, and lifted up coldly by a resolute arm; of feeling the earth swim and float beneath her as she fled: — no more.

When the sense of life returned, she found herself lying upon a strange bed, in a strange room, with a gentle face, seen before, or dreamed of, bending over her, and a gentle hand bathing her lips and temples.

"Tell him I am sorry," she said, wanderingly. "I am much to blame. I might have known it would displease him. But my pride and strength forsook me. I forgot his cruelty — all his old

tenderness came up — I thought he might relent — then there was such a whirl of things, and, before I knew it, I was on the ground before him. Then I felt that if he would speak only one kind word — But — where am I? What room is this?"

"The same room where you lay yesterday, and the day before."

"Yesterday? — and the day before? — Don't perplex me," replied Clara, closing her eyes. "I feel so weak! But" — she looked up again wildly — "was it all a dream?"

"You have been dreaming a good deal, I think," replied Miss Doane, soothingly.

"About that strange journey — and poor little blind Alice and her father — that was not a dream."

"No. They are here. That is, Mr. Thorne is here —"

"Where is Alice?"

"O, not far off. Our good minister, Mr. Murray, came to see you, with his daughter Margaret; and they thought she would be better off at their house."

"He loves her. She is very beautiful, — I am so ugly now! I saw her on horseback," murmured poor Clara, weeping. "For I went up there to that fine house — I did not dream it all — it was too terrible! That dreadful woman — Mrs. Merrivale — it cannot be but my seeing her was real."

"So it was, dear girl," returned Martha Doane, with deep compassion in her tones — "but that was two days ago."

Clara said not a word, but, with a sigh, closed her eyes once more, and seemed to fall asleep.

"Tell me," she whispered, at length — Martha was at her side in an instant — "have I been sick? Was I delirious? And — did I talk about *him*?"

"My dear, dear girl!" Martha answered, embracing her tenderly, "you have been sick — delirious; — and you have told me enough about *him* to make me love you like a sister!"

"Love me? I did not tell you all, then! You would despise me — hate me! All virtuous women join in hunting down, and driving to desperation and distraction, each poor wretch like me!"

"Not the virtuous — but the self-righteous do that. Virtue, in man or woman, is ever charitable; and Charity loves the fallen; Charity says, 'Go, sister, sin no more!' God, who made us, knows how frail we are, and loves us even while we sin, and lets down tender cords of mercy to draw us back, when we have gone astray; and the more one has of God within him, the more, like God, he can forgive — the more he will love the erring. Do not moan so, my poor girl! All will yet be well. This bruised heart of yours will be all the cleaner and softer for its sufferings."

"No, no! I am lost — lost — lost! There is no hope, no love, no salvation for me. No one so fallen ever stood up again in the pure light of heaven. Only darkness follows such, forever and forever!"

Martha could not speak, for the fulness of her heart. She bowed her face by Clara's, and embraced her, sobbing with bursts of sympathy.

"Not so! not so! thank heaven!" she cried, with the enthusiasm of an exalted faith. "I KNOW there is heavenly hope for you — yea, a hundred times more than for those who stand erect in their own pride of strength. Christ never enters by the brazen gate. By the path of humility he steals in. O, I have found that in myself! Once I was proud — once I thought myself accepted of Heaven; but — I tell you this, my sister, to console you — I fell

— fell low as you have fallen, and gave up all — earth and life and heaven! Then, when I was in the dust, the Spirit came. Then first I knew Christ within me; then I saw that in my day of pride the hope I had was but the ghost of hope."

"Tell me about that!" said Clara, eagerly.

"So I will; but you are not strong enough to-day. Some other time —"

"Now! — now! My soul is thirsty — I cannot wait. O, God! was ever one like me restored to peace!"

"You shall hear, and then you will know," replied Martha. "Let me first see if I can do anything to make my father comfortable; then I will be with you again."

Old Mr. Doane had failed a good deal during the summer, and Martha felt the necessity of watching over him as if he had been a mere infant. She found him in the shed, floating a toy-boat in a tub of water, — an occupation that seemed to afford him great delight. On being discovered, however, he made a childish attempt to conceal the plaything behind him; but Martha put her arms about his neck, and kissed him so affectionately, that he recovered his happy temper, and gleefully asked her to stop and see his craft sail.

Tears were in her eyes when she returned to the chamber where Clara lay, and she excused them by telling what she had just seen. "My father — he is such a dear old man!" she went on, wiping her eyes. "I have the strangest feelings towards him! If you could know how changed he is from what he once was, and what changed him, you would not wonder that I feel so. When I remember him as he was, — a strong, calm, happy man, with a fine intellect, and a great warm heart, — and see him as he is now, gone back into his boyhood, living again in the

memory of childish sports —" Martha wept again. Her sorrow seemed somewhat to divert Clara's mind from her own woe. "Take this medicine the doctor left for you, then I will tell you my story."

"Has the doctor been to see me?"

"Yes, three times. He has but just gone from here."

"I am very sick, then! I knew it. I am not sorry. Ah! but I am thankful I was not left to die in the desolate places of the fields! — If she hears of it," added Clara, wandering again, "it will be a comfort to know that I was cared for."

"Your mother?" suggested Martha.

"My mother! what of her? Have I told you?"

"Is she alive? Does she know anything of this?'

"Let her never know! But — she knows too much already! When I am dead you may tell her. Perhaps she will cease to mourn."

"Can I know who she is?" asked Miss Doane.

No, no! that could not be! the poor girl trembled at the thought of seeing one whom she had made to suffer through her folly stand by her bed-side and reproach her. So Martha spoke no more of that, but attempted to soothe her by giving some further account of her own family.

"I had three brothers; I was the youngest child, and an only daughter. I was my father's favorite; for my mother died when I was a baby, and it was thought that I resembled her.

"My two oldest brothers were married, and Jared was away at school, — he was studying a profession, — and I lived alone with my father, when Henry first came to our house."

"Was his name Henry? And you loved him?"

"How I loved him! O, it was a wild, wild love. It might

have been a happy love, too; for he had some noble qualities, and his own love for me was sincere, — but pride — pride! My father was a poor music-teacher. *His* father was wealthy and influential — he forbade our marriage; so at least Henry made me believe; and he had not the courage to face his displeasure. O, how I trusted him! But of this I do not like to speak much. It gives me pain; and my story is like yours here."

"Is it? — is it? Tell me true!" faltered Clara. "It may be wicked — but it gives me joy to hear it — to know that you have really been like me."

"In one sense my misfortune has been heavier than yours. A living witness appeared against me, — the dearest one, — a babe!"

So far Martha had spoken with a calmness and cheerfulness that surprised Clara; but now emotion choked her utterance, and two large tears fell suddenly.

"A babe? Was it like him?"

"The picture of him, to my eyes."

"Ah!" cried Clara, excited, "I used to wish for one! When I feared that he would not love me always — then I thought if I only had a child of his to love me and remind me of him!"

"It was the source of my most exquisite suffering. I had fled to hide my shame. Henry had promised to be with me, but he did not come. I had broken my poor father's heart — my brothers had disowned me — the world sneered at my name — then fell the keenest stroke of all! When I was daily, hourly expecting Henry, the news came — he was *married!*"

"Married?" cried Clara, with a hysteric laugh.

"He had married a proud, rich lady, — his equal, the world called her, in family and position. O, that stroke! I was not

jealous, — I knew he did not love her, — but to know that I had been so deceived, to know that his love was less strong for me than his ambition — that was what tore my heart. And then I was alone, deserted, lost, when I was one day told by the woman at whose house I was, that a gentleman had called to see me. How my heart bounded! The news of his marriage was false, he had kept his word, he had come — "

"Was it so?" interrupted Clara, with a darkened look.

"It was only my foolish fancy. He never came." — Clara's face brightened; she seemed to take a strange joy in Martha's sufferings. — "It was my brother Jared who had sought me out. I covered my face from his sight; I fell upon the ground; I prayed that he would leave me to my fate. But he answered with sweet words, lifted me up gently, and told me that henceforth he would never leave me; he would fill the place of the world to me, — I should be all the world to him. I was grateful as a crushed heart could be; but I did not know my brother, even then; and it was long before I learned what sacrifices he had made for me. He was the accepted lover of a beautiful girl, and they were to be married as soon as he entered upon his profession. But when he heard of my disgrace he went to her, and said, 'She has erred, but she is our sister still. Will you own her before the world?' It was too much to ask of her. She was not hard-hearted; but she feared the world's censure. So she answered, 'No:' him she had chosen — him she was proud to accept — but his fallen sister she could not take by the hand, and walk by her side, and for her sake be scorned by the society in which she had her being. He turned away sorrowful. O, one cannot guess the anguish of that strong, deep nature! But he buried his love at her feet, and left her forever. He never

complained, — he was cheerful, — but for years he could not speak of her; when her name was mentioned, he was silent. This is not all. He gave up his profession — abandoned his cherished studies — put his hands to hard labor — that I might not want. My other brothers blamed him, and refused to countenance what they termed his folly, by any charity. And my father, — broken-hearted man, — they had taken him to their homes, and influenced him, too, against us."

"But your babe — what became of it?"

"This painful story — I tell it as calmly as I can," said Martha, weeping; "but the old agony has still its sharp roots in my heart. Bear with me a little — then I will go on. When my babe was three months old, Jared came to me one day, and said, 'Martha, this hiding from the world is base and infidel. Let us rely on God, and, walking humbly before the eyes of men, submit to be stoned even, rather than sin against our own souls by this concealment.' I asked him, in alarm, what he would do. 'Go back to our native village,' he replied, — O, he was sublime when he said that! — 'and meet this dishonor there. To attempt to fly from it is a fool's thought. It is like the infection of a corpse unburied. We must go and bury it where it lies.' 'O, Jared, what do you mean?' I cried. 'You cannot really think of taking me back there, where the harvest of my shame was sown!' 'It is there,' he answered, 'where the ground must be ploughed afresh, and harrowed, and prepared for a different crop, whose golden waving in the sun of truth will cause the other to be forgotten. There is no other way.' Kind and loving as he was, Jared was firm as adamant, when his feet were planted in the right. When he said, 'There is no other way,' I knew there was no other. *You* know, Clara, O, you know what it was for

me to go back there, where my story was notorious — where curious and scornful eyes would whisper my name with laughter!

"Mr. Murray, the minister here,— for it were here, in this village, that the poison-flower of my life had blossomed, — approved of Jared's determination, and used his influence to secure for us this little farm on advantageous terms. But it was still several months before the premises were ready for us. During the delay there came to me — a summons. It fell like a whirlwind!"

"Your babe!" murmured Clara.

"God called on me to part with it — to let that idol go — to shut the only gate of consolation left to me — to seal the sweet fountain that watered the parched desert of my life. That child — it was as a summer-cloud: it had brought spring gladness — tears and song — to my wintry heart. When the tree was broken and blasted by the lightning, there had put forth a tender green shoot from the scarred trunk — now to be cut away! That sorrow, Clara, — you know nothing of it, — not even you!"

Martha paused to weep. Clara, impatient, besought her to conclude her story.

"The most painful part — that which relates to my child — I must leave till another time, when both of us are stronger. O, the grief — the desolation! Jared was most merciful and brotherly to me then. But he was still firm in the resolution he had taken; and one evening you might have seen him get out of a wagon here before the house, and walk up the door-yard path, supporting on his arm the most wretched and utterly hopeless sister in the world. Into this room I tottered that night

dear, but now abhorred. I should see the grove where I used to walk with Henry, and every tree would remind me — every leaf would whisper the story — the brook would babble of the past so mockingly! But, worst of all, I dreaded the sight of any face that I had ever known. I had enjoyed the admiration and love of some dear companions; but the thought of them now burned me, like *live cinders* of humiliation heaped upon my head. None of those troubled me much, however," said Martha, with a sad smile. "O, they kept away from me faithfully! I was more alone here in my old home than I had been among strangers. My leprosy was shunned as religiously as if its touch had been fatal to the soul itself.

"It was what I expected; I was thankful for it. Even the face of our good minister I dreaded to see. But Mr. Murray has a heart full of charity. Like our Saviour, he makes himself the brother of the outcast and the poor. He came and held to my fevered lips the sweet cup of Christian consolation. He assured me, with a smile of love and trust, that the day would come when I would bless God for all my sufferings. He spoke like a prophet, and the time he prophesied of was not slow in coming. Cut off from the shallow streams of the world's love, I turned within myself, and found there a fountain of the infinite love of God. Then truly all things were added unto me. Not only the joy of spirit was mine, but, sitting under the trees of heaven, everything I needed appeared to fall into my lap like ripe fruit. Friends — the very friends my soul required — came to me

and cruel thorns; but the clear light and pure air have recompensed me for every hardship.

"And now I know, dear sister, that the only wise course for me was to come back here, and live down my bad name. I think I have lived it down. After the act of confession, in coming back, I felt my conscience relieved. My sin was between me and my God. Deceiving no one with respect to my past, I endeavored so to live that the dews of heaven's forgiveness, falling on a contrite spirit, might in time wash out its stain. And, O, I have been wonderfully blessed! My poor father was the first to return to me — then others came and took me by the hand — it was like a dream! I, so lost, so crushed, so shunned — was it possible that I was thus restored? I remember when I used to steal into the church, on Sunday, with my head bowed low down, to hear Mr. Murray preach, and sit without looking up till the services were over — the very church where I used to step so proudly, and sing, with unblushing face, in the conspicuous choir. Only Jared walked by my side then; only the benevolent minister took me by the hand there, at first; but soon — I don't know how it was — pew-doors were opened for me, and the proudest were not ashamed to seat me by their side. Now I sing again in the choir, and do not hide my face."

"Let me die! — let me die!" moaned Clara. "I could not endure what you have endured. I will tell you why. One night last winter, I was hurrying through the streets, wild from a blow *he* had struck me, when I came upon a poor man with his blind girl perishing in the storm. It was like a fatality. The man and child — they were the same I met upon my journey and led to your door. Then I led them to another door — to the door of my own parents, who had moved to a strange house since I

deserted them — to the door of my own home that should have been. I ran in — I showed my face before I was aware — eyes stared upon me that have stared in my soul ever since! I see them in my dreams; they burn before me in broad day, more fiery than the sun. Those eyes — those eyes! how could I endure to have them look upon me morning, noon and evening?"

"What if they looked lovingly?" said Martha.

"Lovingly! They can have nothing but glances of hatred and reproach for me! But yet — I think my poor mother — my good father — my kind uncle — the dear children — they must remember me, sometimes, with charity."

And Clara, recalling the images of those who were once dear to her, turned her face upon her pillow, and wept until she fell asleep.

XXVIII.

A WEEK AT THE PARSONAGE.

"HOW many days have I been sick, Leviston?" asked Martin.

"Some ten days," replied his faithful friend and attendant.

"I think that will do! Ten days! And I should have written a sketch for the *True Standard*, an editorial article for the *Streamer of the Free*, — Chaffer has been on a time since the Fourth, — besides finishing a story I had begun for the *Squib Review*, while I have been lying here. Well, sir, I don't think you or any other man can persuade me to be sick any longer."

And Martin resolutely began to dress himself after the fashion of well people, in the face of his friend's remonstrance.

"In twenty-four hours you 'll be down sick again," insisted George. "Your constitution is worn out. What a state you were in ten days ago! You had wasted yourself to the thinness of a shadow by continual thinking. I don't wonder that a little excitement at the fire brought on this attack."

"A little excitement?" echoed Martin. "Did n't I perform a labor of Hercules? Did n't I rush through seas of fire? Was n't I a Shadrach-Meshach-and-Abnego — three heroes in one? I have tried to persuade myself, lying here, that some such case might be made out. But, jesting aside, — it was not the excitement you speak of, nor the slight scorching I got, that laid me open to this attack; but the disappointment and vexation that followed. I don't think I can ever forgive Cheesy for losing Alice."

"You 've talked about that enough. I 've no doubt she is safe somewhere. Think of something else."

"I must, I suppose. I must think of my writing. Help me clear this table; I will dash off an article this morning."

Leviston tried in vain to dissuade him. As a last resort, he sought to divert his mind by producing a couple of letters from his pocket-book.

"Letters! for me!" exclaimed Martin.

"The one superscribed in a lady's hand came five or six days ago," said his friend. "I was afraid to give it to you in your weak state. I knew it was from that young woman — Miss Murray — out by Summer Hill, and you are so excitable. -"

Martin interrupted him with a strong expression of indignant disapproval. At the same time his eager fingers opened the letter. In an instant his countenance changed, lighting up joyfully.

"O, your misguided friendship!" he exclaimed. "Why did you keep this back? Its contents would have cured me, had I been ten times sicker than I was. It 's from Martha Doane. Alice and her father are at her house! I will go out there this very day!"

"Nonsense; you are not able," replied George. "I am as glad as you are to hear from Alice; but I don't go wild about it. Take at least a minute to reflect, and read the other letter the while. It came yesterday."

"Better and better!" cried Martin. "O, Leviston! shall I be angry with you? This alone would have cured me, when everything else had failed. It 's from Junius Murray. He speaks of Alice, and Miss Doane's letter, and reminds me of a promise I made him to spend a week at the parsonage this summer. Now he thinks is a favorable time for the visit; and so do I. My valise shall be packed at once."

"Now, look here," said his thoughtful friend. "You know your temperament — or ought to — as well as I do. It is n't to be trusted. I know just how it will be, if you go out there. That Miss Murray —"

"Hush — stop there! Not another word. You enrage me beyond the forbearance of friendship."

Martin was more than half in earnest. Yet Leviston could not refrain from giving him some wholesome advice, seeing that he was intent on rushing into temptation. He abused him — Martin's term for the treatment — in his harshest manner, at the same time lending him money, and assisting to pack his valise.

The news spread with rapidity among the boarders that Martin was going to the country. Some congratulated him on his decision; two or three warned him against imprudence; and Miss Clove, the lady supposed to have had her wits shattered by an early disappointment, shed tears at his departure. She had been like a Sister of Charity to him during his illness, bringing him all sorts of delicacies, such as a sick man should never touch, and talking to him most kindly and tediously when he wanted to sleep; and,

in remembrance of her attentions, he presented her with a copy of "The Lady of the Lake," at parting. Miss Befflin, too, whom he had never before seen at so early an hour of the day, came languishingly from her chamber, in sylph-like attire, to bid him good-bye. She simpered and sighed, and gave him her hand with the tenderest look; wished him the speedy recovery of his health and a speedy return; confessed how lonely the house would seem during his absence; suggested that a letter from him would be held precious; and made such a motion of putting up her lips, that, notwithstanding the repugnance inspired by visible cosmetics, Martin could not refuse the expected kiss. But when he advanced with lips all charged and primed, she uttered a modest little scream, and covered her face.

"Excuse my boldness," said he, glad to withdraw.

"O, dear! how silly I am!" She assumed a resolute air and gave him a mincing smack. "Adieu," she added, with a French accent; "adieu, maw namee! Num ooble-ay paw, a retoorney byang-tow."

"Disgusting!" muttered Leviston, as he carried his friend's valise down stairs.

"O, beware, my lord, of jealousy," whispered Martin. "It is the green-eyed monster that doth make — and so forth. By the way," he added, gravely, "let me give you a little advice before I go. You know that your temperament is not to be trusted. Now don't commence making love to Miss Befflin as soon as I am out of the way. Your head is too full of romance yet. You don't know what you want yourself. You 'd better avoid Cicily, and be safe."

"Hush! hush!" whispered George. "There 's her mother."

Martin thought his joke spoiled by a most disastrous chance,

He had been overheard by Mrs. Befflin, under the stairs. He reddened, expecting to see her justly indignant at the light manner in which her daughter's name had been spoken; but he was spared that mortification; she was never so gracious before; doubtless regarding his mock-advice to George as serious counsel, and a high compliment to Cicily's charms. He took leave of her civilly, and restrained his feelings until he had got into the coach at the door.

"Good-bye, Leviston!" he cried. "Take the advice of a friend, and beware of—"

"Keep your head inside, or you 'll take cold," growled George, not well pleased at being thus cheated, by a jest, out of a sincere last word of warning he had been meditating for Martin.

Twenty minutes later, seated in the cars, Martin was travelling at high railroad speed into the country. The day was fair and sweet; the summer verdure of the woods and fields charmed his eye, and the breezes that blew in at the windows inspired him with new health and strength. Eager as he was to meet his friends, the journey seemed brief; the station was reached, and he found himself in the village stage-coach, before he had recovered from the first exhilaration of breathing the country air.

This time, Martin rode inside and kept his hat on his head; yet with no small degree of interest did he look out to discover the scene of his well-remembered chase across the fields. O, miracle of nature! how, with the seasons, had the country changed! Where were the snow-drifts, the blinding volleys of the furious storm, the wild, bleak mountain-side? Martin saw nothing but pleasant slopes, covered with waving corn and billowy rye, meadows and pasture-lands stretching far away, and fair groves shaking their green banners in the summer wind.

The stage-coach was almost empty. Martin had but two companions — a middle-aged female, in a faded bonnet, and a red-faced, corpulent old gentleman, in a vast, double-breasted, black satin waistcoat, and a heavy, well-preserved, old-fashioned dress-coat, with an enormous high collar and steel buttons. The woman divided her attention about equally between her companion and her handkerchief, — talking mournfully one minute, and shedding tears the next, — while he seemed constantly aiming to console her.

"Everything to be thankful fur! everything to be thankful fur!" he exclaimed, in a rich, liquid voice. "Only think on 't! How much wus it might 'a' been! It 's the happiest day of my life — this is; I 'm so thankful. Providence has done wonders for us! So cheer up, cheer up, sister! Don't be down-hearted. Le 's try to show her a cheerful face, anyhow. She needs it, of all people — poor, poor girl!"

Joyful as he was, the eyes of the corpulent gentleman overflowed, and, to hide his emotion, he pretended to be diverted by jolly sights visible from the coach-window.

Martin had directed the stage-driver to set him down at the door of Mr. Doane's cottage; and, arrived there, he was surprised to see his companions make preparations to alight with him.

"Ha! you stop here, my friend!" cried the occupant of the black satin waistcoat, evidently much excited, and talking at random. "Cheer up, sister, now! Cheer up! We 're here! She 'll be lookin' for us. Put on your brightest face, sister. Go ahead, young man, and tell 'em we 're comin'. Won't she be glad to see her old uncle? Toss our things down here anywheres; they 're of no consequence, driver. Come, sister! cheer up, cheer up!"

Martha Doane at that moment made her appearance, hastening down to the road. She first greeted Martin affectionately, and then turned, with a countenance full of sympathy, to receive the other visitors.

"How is my child?" sobbed the female.

"She is not quite as well as when I sent for you," replied Martha. "But it will do her good to see you. She wants sympathy and charity — O, so much!"

"There! what did I tell ye?" cried the owner of the big coat-collar. "The dear, dear girl! We 'll put heart into her! I am as jolly as a rope-dancer," he added, with tears running down his honest face. "Show the way. Bless me, how the wind and dust pesters my eyes! There! it 's all right now."

Mrs. Grayle had so little control over her feelings, that Martha thought it best for her brother to go in first and prepare Clara for meeting her mother. She accordingly left the latter with Martin in the sitting-room, and entered the adjoining chamber with Uncle Joe, who bore up stoutly, until he saw his darling lying so pale and emaciated — so worn and changed — on the couch, and looking towards him with those strange, burning eyes. He made one last attempt to appear happy and speak cheerfully, then rushed forward, with great sobs, and caught her in his big arms, and kissed her again and again, pouring out tears like rain upon her wasted cheeks.

"Is n't your name Merrivale?" asked Mrs. Grayle of Martin, in an interval of grief.

"That is my name. I thought I had seen you before, when I first observed you in the cars, but could n't guess where. I remember now."

"When you see Mr. Leviston — will you tell him?"

Without waiting for a reply, she hastily dried her eyes, suppressed a sob or two, and followed her brother, — entering the chamber just as Miss Doane was coming out.

"You need not be alarmed for Alice," said Martha, as soon as she could speak to answer Martin's questions. "Her father is at work for us, and appears as industrious as his miserable health will permit. Her greatest trouble now is that her brother Martin does not come and see her. Did n't Junius write you that she was at his father's ?"

"At the parsonage ! There 's not a word about it in his letter," cried Martin. "I think I will lose no time, if my presence is needed to cheer her precious heart."

"I will not detain you," replied Martha, smiling at his eagerness. "There are others at the parsonage who will be glad to see you. I have these good people here, or I might be selfish enough to detain you. But I feel certain that you will make us a long visit before you return to town."

There was such a fine magnetism in her warm nature, and Martin felt its softening influence so strongly, that he was but too happy to promise what she asked. So, charging him to remember, she let him go, and watched him with a countenance full of solicitude, relieved with bright gleams of hope and joy, as he disappeared in the direction of the parsonage.

The young man had quite forgotten that he was an invalid. His step was elastic, his eye bright, his cheek glowing. Rapid beats of heart, too, he experienced, as he approached the minister's quiet brown house, nestled among shrubbery and trees. He opened the gate, softly, and passing into the cool green yard, saw the parson at his study window, reclined in his easy-chair, with Margaret brushing his venerable head. The latter, looking out

as he approached the door, started visibly and suppressed a cry.

"What have you found?" demanded the parson.

She made no reply, but ran out impulsively, and presently reäppeared, accompanied by the excited Martin.

"Ho! ho! our old friend!" cried Mr. Murray, benignantly. "What a start you gave me, Margaret! I thought you had come upon an invading monster in my gray hair. I am right glad to see you, sir! How well you are looking!"

"I ought to look well. I have had my share of sickness lately," replied Martin.

"Prophetic Alice!" exclaimed Margaret. "She told us five days ago that she could see you on a sick bed."

"And how is she herself?"

"Quite feeble; but I can see that she grows stronger and stronger every day. She is out with Junius somewhere. I will go and bring her."

"Let me go with you — and surprise her."

"O, yes! I should have proposed it but for your recent illness."

"I was never better in my life!" exclaimed the exhilarated Martin.

Through a fair garden, and across a shady orchard, he followed Margaret's guidance, until they came out upon an undulating meadow. Their path led to a poplar-tree on the sloping bank of a clear running stream; and there, upon the shaded grass, where the flowing water mingled its music with the rustling of the leaves, sat Junius and Alice.

"It is a favorite spot," whispered Margaret: "I thought we should find them here."

ALICE AT THE BROOK SIDE. p. 458.

[illegible] was reading with her elbow upon the [illegible] and her chin upon her hand, when [illegible] by which her hands were held upon her breast and [illegible] of [illegible] of violets [illegible] ness, [illegible] up from [illegible] book [illegible] sister [illegible] Mary was [illegible] them from [illegible] [illegible] and [illegible] forward, stopping [illegible]

"What are you [illegible], Mary?" said Jo [illegible]

"Why, all [illegible]," replied the [illegible], "they [illegible] here were [illegible]."

"Where did you get that [illegible]?"

"I [illegible] and I was [illegible] [illegible] [illegible]

ALICE AT THE BRO[illegible]

Junius. who was reading, with his elbow upon the grass and his chin upon his hand, while the child sat by with her hands folded upon her breast and her face clothed in a sweet veil of pensiveness, looked up from his book, and saw his sister and Martin watching them from above. Martin placed his finger on his lips, and came forward, stepping softly.

"What are you dreaming, Alice?" said Junius.

"When all men are good," replied the blind girl, "there will be no more snakes."

"Where did you get that idea?"

"It came to me as I was wondering why such ugly things are in the world. They are first in our own hearts, and nature only shows us pictures of ourselves."

"What put reptiles into your mind here?"

"When some persons come near me, I see weeds and crawling things, just as I see doves, and robins, and flowers with others. I was thinking about that."

As she spoke, Alice arose to her feet, drew a quick breath, and passing her hand across her forehead, stood, with a startled expression, as if listening to far-off voices. Junius asked what she heard; but, without answering, she turned her face towards Martin, extending her hands, and began to climb the bank.

"Did you hear me laugh?" said Margaret, stepping between her and her companion.

"O, don't vex me! He is here — I know he is!" cried Alice. "Don't hold me! don't!"

The next moment Martin had her in his arms; she nestled in his bosom like a bird, embracing his neck and weeping joyfully.

"Where is the shadow that stood between us?" he asked,

fondly, after a lapse of several minutes, during which much had taken place that need not be reported.

"I do not see it any more," said Alice.

"Then what is there henceforth to come between your heart and mine, my child?"

Her head drooped, a sigh stirred her bosom, and for a time she seemed dreaming. At length, with a faint smile, she extended her hands, and having found one of Margaret's and one of Martin's, she joined them, and gliding from the young man's arms, laid herself down quietly upon the grass at their feet.

"What is the meaning of this?" faltered Martin, trembling with a fearful joy.

"This is my place; I shall be so happy here!" murmured the child.

Behold now our convalescent in a fair way to mend! He shall eat no more drugs; the parsonage is better than a hospital; the intercourse of friends, joy, and sympathy, and hope, minister to his mind diseased, while the winds of summer breathe a fresh, warm, spring-tide life into his veins. Were ever days so golden?

Martin feels quite at home at the parsonage. His room appears to have been waiting for him ever since he slept there, one memorable night, months ago. It is neat and airy; it looks out upon the sunrise through the dark foliage of maple-trees; and all day long bees hum and birds sing before the windows. More than this, Margaret — whose mother lies in the little grave-yard just visible over the hill — is the busy housekeeper at the parsonage, and her presence seems to have left a perfume and a charm in Martin's chamber.

Were ever days so golden? Storms keep aloof; only light clouds, white as whitest wool, float lazily in the sky; yet from

recent rains the earth is steeped in moisture. To a sick body and a tired mind, late imprisoned in the city's sultry walls, this life brings intoxication. Our convalescent drinks it in deep, delicious draughts. He exults in the sunshine like young kittens. The breezes fan him; birds, and brooks, and whispering leaves lull him with their music; the refulgent woods and fields and grand old hills delight his eye with pictures, while mother earth cradles him to softest dreams on her voluptuous lap.

He hath the range of the fields: sometimes he goeth forth alone, and may be seen, in the heat of the day, lying in the shade of trees, or standing with his feet in running streams, like cattle. But most frequently he taketh a companion. Now he leadeth Alice by the hand; they go by the brook-sides, through sweet-smelling meadows, and under the leafy canopy of the groves, talking of love and dreams. Now he is accompanied by the good pastor himself, who delighteth in nature as a child; and their conversation is of life, literature, and spiritual laws; or the genial old man relates portions in his past experience, of which the young author will make use in future compositions.

"Your profession is a worthy one," says Mr. Murray; "but it is fraught with peril. Next to the ministry, I know of none more dangerous to the soul of a young aspirant. We are apt to forget our mission, — which is to pour the oil of love into the wounds of this world, — and live mere sensual, selfish lives. It grieves my soul to see writers and preachers cold and careless, when on every side a suffering humanity is crying out for reforms. O, sir! in all we do, let us not forget our responsibility — let us not forget what we owe to God and man."

With Junius Martin takes long rambles, which are attended with much satisfaction to his soul. The son is more enthusiastic,

more radical, and possesses a finer insight into the life of things, than the father. Martin thinks he has genius, and should write.

"If I could not be a preacher, I should prefer literature before all things else," exclaims the youthful student. "When I arrive at the perception of a truth, with the joy it brings comes the desire to communicate it to others. I could not write books from ambition only; first and foremost would be the impulse to pour out generous waters for this thirsty age; to inspire the hearts of men with some little nobility of nature, with love and faith. But to do this from the pulpit! to abandon your tongue to the utterances of the ever-present Spirit — I can conceive of no more glorious occupation."

"How you shame me for the frivolous work I do!" answers Martin. "I have longed to achieve something worthy of the soul, but a low necessity balks me. From week to week I must fritter away what little talent I have in writing paltry sketches for a still more paltry pay."

"A useful apprenticeship, let us trust," replies his friend. "Premature success is the most unfortunate thing which can happen to an author."

"I know that rough discipline is often the best friend to our powers," says the comforted author. "I thank heaven for all I have had. I see now that, had my poor Beggar of Bagdad made me the fame and fortune I hoped for, it would have proved a lasting damage to me."

Many excellent people err, with the best intentions, in respect to the treatment of guests. If you visit at their house, they consider their honor pledged that you should be continually entertained. You must not be allowed a moment's quiet, a moment's repose, except in your bed at night. They take you, one after

another, and harry you with incessant talk, until kindness becomes tyrannical, and your oppressed bosom sighs for a little freedom, a little peace. It is not so at the parsonage. Martin is privileged to go or come, to talk, or read, or write, or range the fields, as he may be in the mood. Crowds of company are not called in to exercise him in the dull routine of etiquette. Nor is he expected to pay for the hospitality he enjoys by making calls with his friends. He visits the Doanes — nobody else; not even his uncle's family. Louise Merrivale, who rides down to the parsonage with her invalid brother, and is on the best of terms with her cousin Martin, will not urge him to come up to the Hill, on account — she says it boldly — of her hateful mother: "she don't blame him at all for staying away."

Nor do the Murrays fall into the other extreme of neglecting their guest. Absorbed as Junius is in his studies, he finds ample time for converse with his friend, and the parson himself, with an infinite future before him, as he expresses it, can give him an hour at any time of the day. Only Margaret seems chary of her attentions. She is not only her father's housekeeper, but his scribe also, writing nearly all his letters for him, and copying out his sermons in a plain, neat hand. Yet she has many hours for their guest; but he is exorbitant; his appetite for her society is not to be satisfied. Ah, fickle youth! is Sophronia all forgotten? Sophronia! she was but a flashing meteor; Margaret is his fixed and everlasting star. There is a union of souls here, a rushing together of two lives in one glad stream, — so he fondly trusts, — not a meeting of lips merely. Indeed, their lips have scarcely met thrice. There is an atmosphere of purity surrounding Margaret which overawes her lover. He trembles if her dress but brushes by him; the touch of her hand is electrical, —

a kiss is too sacred a fruit to be carelessly plucked from that fair tree. The first taste thereof creates an era in his existence. Ah, golden afternoon! day of all days in the year! Sitting under a hedge, picking berries, they playfully feed each other, until the kisses Martin's crimsoned fingers take away have made him desperate with delicious pain.

"Ah! that is selfish!" cries Margaret, as, having tempted her to open her lips for a plump berry, he places it laughingly between his own.

Audacious youth! is this premeditated strategy? He bends forward, — and O, such perilous glances as he pours into her deep eyes! — and offers her the berry in his lips, at the same time holding her hands. She receives it graciously — it unites their mouths like glue; and the subtle poison of its juice — can it be aught else? — creeps through all their veins. But fie on such details!

"Are you jealous now, my child?" Martin whispers into the blind girl's ear.

"O, no! the more you love her, the more I love you!" is her sincere reply. "Her influence is so beautiful. It was different with Sophronia —"

"Hush! don't speak so loud!" Martin places his finger on his lips, for Margaret is within hearing.

On the Sabbath, — a still warm day, so peaceful and so pure that the cackling of the hens hath a strange sound, — Martin goes to church with the family. The village meeting-house is not far off; so the little party proceeds on foot; and blind Alice walks between Margaret and Martin, while Junius and his father come more slowly after.

"Why do you weep, darling?" Margaret asks.

"My father — I am afraid for him!" murmurs the blind girl. "I don't know why, — I don't know what it is, — but something is going to happen; I see it like a dark, dreadful shape, creeping towards him. I must go to him this afternoon."

Encouraging her, as best she can, Margaret conducts her friends up the meeting-house steps, under the silent porch and through the cool aisle, and seats them in the minister's pew — Alice between her and Martin. Two or three voices in the choir are chanting; the organ pours forth its subdued thunder; and over all is heard the great bell clanging in the steeple. A pleasant gloom rests upon the calm faces and the empty seats which Martin sees around him. How strange the effect! Indefinable sensations creep over him, and floods of memory rush upon his heart, till tears dim his sight, and his head sinks upon the back of the pew before him. When the organ is silent, and the voices of the choir appear to have floated up and dissolved in the listening ear of heaven, and the rustling of dresses has ceased; when only the fluttering of fans is heard, with now and then a half-suppressed cough in the congregation; when the pulsations of the tolling bell have died, like circular waves, on the wide lake of silence; — Martin looks up. He is just in time to see Mrs. Merrivale sweep with a great stir into the slip before him, followed by Louise, while the colonel, far more gentle and reserved than his wife, stands patiently holding the pew-door.

Mr. Murray is not a man of brilliant eloquence. No fine intellectual vigor distinguishes his prayer or the discourse that follows. But there is a clearness, strength, and earnestness of heart, in whatever comes from his lips, which combine to give him a power over his hearers, not seldom enjoyed by ministers of the day. Then his words are winged with love, and they find

many a nest in many an empty heart, where they shall inhabit, until the serpent of selfishness steals in and stings them with his deadly fangs. Martin's soul is fed, and, under the inspiration of the sermon, he pencils the following lines on a blank leaf of Margaret's hymn-book, and gives them to her to read.

THE GOOD PREACHER.

Give me the preacher who with scorpion-whips
  Of scorn pursues hypocrisy and craft,
  Yet better loves to hold the healing draft
Of Christian hope to sorrow's fevered lips;
Whose hand from decent sin the fig-leaf strips;
  Whose living words our spirits heavenward waft,
  Or shape and shoot conviction's lightning-shaft
Through darkest clouds of unbelief's eclipse;
A preacher who, 'mid life's abysmal shades,
  Reveals in glorious glimpses to the sight
Truth's luminous ladder, by whose dazzling grades,
Through new and ever-opening starry glades;
  Souls, love-baptized, approach the invisible height
Where sits the Infinite Good, veiled in excess of light.

Junius sits with the choir, and Martin recognizes his voice in the singing. Also another voice, of singular beauty, clear, soaring, joyous, strikes his ear with a familiar sound.

"It was Miss Doane," Margaret assured him, on the way home. "Her voice is like her spirit — full of purity and sweetness."

"I am never tired of studying her face," returned Martin. "What goodness in its expression! Is she not much beloved?"

"No one else has such warm friends. There has been a great

cloud upon her life, but it has lifted gloriously. She is a true and noble woman."

"Whoever is true and noble will send forth a light into the world; the good will rejoice at it, and the worst will be benefited."

"Her example," Margaret went on, "has done wonders in our society. It has inspired the poor and despised with hope, the proud with charity, and all of us with faith."

"And, her brother — is he not an admirable character?"

"He is a hero! I don't know where you will find such another; one of the few persons in this wide world who know how to make a sacrifice."

"They have their reward," said Martin. "Truly, I never saw two hearts more filled with the glad spirit of nature. What sweet wisdom, too, flows from them."

"It is because they have relied upon principle — upon God," replied Margaret. "To such God reveals himself; around such I believe there is always a goodly company of angels."

"I have seen such strange pictures of Miss Doane!" said Alice, who had been very thoughtful all this time. "There was one — I think I know now what it meant. I saw her — O, so sad and distressed! — going a lonely road; and her tears had made the clayey ground so wet and soft that her feet left a deep impression at every step. It seemed so cruel! but in a little while I saw that the clay hardened and became like a rock behind her, with every footprint as distinct as if it had been chiseled. Then she was glad, for her progress had been so true and sure, that others could follow in her steps."

Martin's stay at the parsonage was abbreviated somewhat by an unexpected occurrence. This was no less an event than the

arrival of the Rev. Mr. Mowle and lady, of boarding-house memory. These excellent people were travelling for the gentleman's health; and, as they always made it a point in journeying never to stop at a hotel when the house of a brother clergyman was convenient, the parsonage was not to be slighted. Accordingly, one fine afternoon, a covered wagon, filled with trunks, bandboxes and travelling-bags, and drawn by one horse, made its appearance at Mr. Murray's door.

"Sit still a moment, dear," said Mr. Mowle, having got out of the wagon with much labor and many groans; "I'll go in and introduce myself, and then come for you."

"Mr. Mowle, dear!" cried the lady, beckoning him back, as he was opening the gate.

"What is it, dear?"

"An't that Mr. Merrivale, who boarded at Mr. Wormlett's?"

"Where, dear? With that young lady in the garden? I don't know. It is a providential circumstance if it is he; I shall be saved the awkwardness of introducing myself."

Thus it happened that Martin was pressed into the service. The reverend man dragged him forward like a culprit, and forced from him an introduction which gave two additional guests to Mr. Murray's house. This was bad enough; but what vexed Martin most was the delight those good people evinced at meeting him. Had he been a nephew or cousin of dear memory, they could not have assumed more familiar terms of friendship.

"My dear," said Mrs. Mowle to her husband at the tea-table

"Undoubtedly," replied Mr. Mowle. — "There, dear! I forgot my Ramshorn Cordial! Had I better take a spoonful of it now? I think I'll let it go, however, this time. Yes, I am glad to see our young friend here; he only needs good influences to work upon him to become a useful member of society. Miss Murray, your tea is so good that I don't care if I trouble you for another cup. This isn't my third, is it, dear? Only half a cup, then, Miss Murray. I have to be careful of my diet."

The hot biscuit Mr. Mowle ate that night brought him such distress that he was unable to sleep; in consequence of which he appeared low the next day, and remarked, at the breakfast-table, that he was afraid it would be necessary for him to intrude upon Mr. Murray's hospitality one night longer. The good parson smiled a welcome, and Mrs. Mowle said, "yes, dear; she thought they had better stay."

Hence the haste with which Martin that same forenoon deserted the parsonage, and went to hide his remorse and mortification in the neighboring farm-house. Clara Grayle had been removed to Boston by her friends; Alice was at Miss Doane's, where she had been since Sunday, on account of her father's illness; and Martin thought no better time could be chosen for the "long visit" he had promised.

He was accompanied across the fields by Junius. They were met half-way by Mr. Jared Doane.

Having changed companions, Martin proceeded on the way at a quick pace.

"Caleb has not been a well man since the day he came to my house," observed the tall Jared, taking long strides along the path. "I have not let him work much; but his mind was in such an unsettled state that I thought it best for him to be kept pretty well employed. This morning, however, he happens to be badly off. Dr. Pinworth came in about an hour ago, and gave him some medicine; but no effect is discernible as yet. If there is any change, it is for the worse. Alice is so much distressed that I wish she had happened to be absent at this crisis."

"I doubt if she could be kept away," replied Martin. "She was troubled about him all day Sunday. Before a word was breathed about his sickness, she said she must come to him."

Martin found Caleb in greater peril, and Alice in deeper distress, than he had expected. Indeed, matters had been rapidly growing worse since Jared left the house.

"O, my brother Martin!" cried the blind girl, clinging to her friend, — "I am so glad you have come! My poor father! — you can do him some good, can't you? Speak to him — call him to himself!"

"I will do what I can, dear child! There — don't cry so!"

"Just now he did not know me," Alice went on, endeavoring to speak calmly. "He called me Sally Hicks, — a girl that used to live with us, and stole my mother's ring. I said, 'Dear father, it is your own dear, dear Alice.' But he didn't know me." — Her heart swelled up again with a wild passion of grief. — "He said, 'Don't fool me. I know where my darling is. The pond is full of water, and she lies in the bottom.' O, tell him I am here!"

XXIX.

OTHER CHANGES.

ALEB THORNE was sitting on the lounge, with his elbows on his knees and his face between his hands. Martin spoke to him, but he did not look up.

"He has not been in his right mind for several days," said Martha, in a low tone; "but we did not think him seriously deranged until Saturday. He was hoeing corn, when all at once he began to weep. Jared asked him what the matter was."

"And he said it was too bad to chop the frogs so!" spoke up the boy Amos, with an excited countenance. "He thought the ground was all frogs, and he could n't put his hoe down without cutting 'em! And last night he took grandfather one side, and asked him what we kept those three bears chained for, under the shed."

"Mr. Thorne!" said Martin, again, taking his hand, "how do you do this morning?"

"The water keeps saying, 'Whether or no! whether or no!'

Hark! do you hear it?" asked Caleb, with a sickly gleam in his haggard face.

"Do you know me, Mr. Thorne?"

"You are the officer they sent for; but I am not afraid of you. Only have me shaved before I am taken into court; and look here! — let the barber be under oath. — Hark! there it is again! 'Whether or no! whether or no!' What is the crime? Arson?"

"My dear Caleb," replied Martin, "there is no crime. I am not an officer. We are all your friends."

"An old story! I know that stratagem. But you need n't be afraid to tell me the worst. Arson and murder, I think it is. But they can prove nothing. It was an accidental explosion. They took Alice from me, and, because I went for her, put her down in the pond. The boys will find her when they go a fishing."

"Here I am, father! Dear, dear father! here I am! Don't you know me?" cried the blind girl, kneeling at his feet, and embracing them.

"Here is your child, Mr. Thorne," said Martin, placing his arm affectionately around her, and laying Caleb's hand upon her breast. "This is indeed Alice."

"A cruel sham!" returned Caleb, shaking his head. "I am sick to-day! If I was well I would explain it all. But I have eaten too much salt fish, and the water troubles me."

"I know you are unwell, Mr. Thorne. I would talk no more just now; but lie down, and try to sleep."

"You are a model officer! There 's no resisting such politeness." And Caleb, throwing his feet upon the lounge, allowed Martin to arrange the pillows beneath his head. "But to sleep

well, I must be satisfied on one point," — raising himself on his elbow. — "There is no law to burn a man, is there?"

"None whatever."

"Not even for murder or arson? Then let them do their worst! Fire is the only thing I am afraid of. Let some one keep the flies off and I think I can sleep." He lay down, and closed his eyes, but sprang up again almost immediately. "See here, Mr. Officer! what does it mean? 'Whether or no! whether or no!' I don't understand it. Does it mean that I am to be hung, whether I am guilty or not?"

"O, no," returned Martin; "it has sung the same tune for more than seven years. It is the old song of the water. It don't allude to you at all."

"Wake me in season," said Caleb, lying down again. "If I should be tardy in court, they would call me a coward."

Thereupon Amos hastened from the room, exploding with laughter. Martin drew the weeping Alice gently away, while Jared took his seat by Caleb, and frightened the flies from his face with a fan.

"O, let me do that!" said old Mr. Doane, entering the room. "It will be fun for me."

"Very well, father," answered Jared, resigning his seat and the fan. "Be careful and not wake him."

The old man appeared delighted with the employment. Now he flourished the fan with ostentatious zeal; then he would seek to entrap the flies in his hands by strategy. He was thus engaged when Caleb, in the course of a few minutes, awoke.

Caleb: "What have they changed judges for?"

Old man: "I like some light employment; and this is just the thing to suit me."

Caleb: "You are a better judge than the other one."

Old man, highly gratified: "I am a good judge of old cheese. I can tell a good kite, and the difference between a whippoorwill and a night-hawk."

Caleb: "I did n't like the black horns the other judge wore. Now let the witness appear. I can destroy her testimony; but if you will say nothing about the diamonds, I will not speak of the ring."

Old Mr. Doane, with a shrewd glance at Martin: "I'll have the whole story from him now; don't say anything! What diamonds, Mr. Thorne?"

Caleb: "They say I stole them, and swallowed them. If it is proved, I am to be cut open, for the recovery of the property. I know there are diamonds in me, for I feel them burn and prickle; but I never swallowed them. Ask her how long she has been a policeman. Sally Hicks! can you swear that Alice's mother did not die a natural death? Hold the sword to her throat, and let her answer!"

Old man: "It is a mixed up mess. I can't make head or tail of it."

Caleb, sternly: "I charge you not to let that witness escape! It is Sally Hicks in disguise. I know her by the wart. She swore that she had seen me dead drunk in the streets more than a dozen times; that 's what sent me to the House of Correction. Now I will have the perjury proved. We will see then what she will say about the murder. I am sure my wife died a natural death; and those who say I killed her shall suffer the penalty of the law."

Caleb's insanity appeared to grow upon him until afternoon. He thought Mr. Murray a hangman; and once caught Alice by

the hair, calling her the "little brown witch,"— a character that had given him great imaginary trouble, — and declaring that her crying gave him cramps in the stomach. But at length his strength began to fail him; he was got to bed, and, sinking into a quiet slumber, he slept soundly for several hours.

It was night when he awoke. Meantime a storm came on; clouds, that lay like crouching monsters in the sultry west all the afternoon, rose up and shook dull thunder from their backs; the lightning grew frequent and vivid; and, as the evening closed, the earth became canopied in black. A sudden burst of the storm seemed to have disturbed Caleb's sleep.

"They loaded the cannon with camphene, or it would never have burst," he said, in a faint voice. "The people keep shouting, 'Bob Synders was blown to flinders.' Some say his buttons killed a flock of pigeons; but I don't believe it."

Martin, who sat by his bedside, conversing with Miss Doane in whispers, — Alice, worn out, had fallen asleep with her head on Martha's lap, — arose and bent over him, asking him if he was comfortable.

"I think I have been dreaming," replied Caleb, vacantly. "What place is this?"

"You are in Mr. Doane's house. Do you know me?"

"I remember you very well, but I can't speak your name. I think you were very kind to my poor blind girl; and I did you some wrong. My head is not quite clear. What was that?"

"A flash of lightning," replied Martin.

"What sharp thunder!" said Caleb. "It must have struck not far off. Is it the wind that rushes so?"

"The wind — and now the rain lashes the windows. It is a terrible night."

"O, yes! I know that voice. You are Mr. Merrivale. I am very weak, or I would thank you. You were a brother to Alice — she always called you so. I was a fool to be jealous; I hated you and feared you. I hope you forgive me."

"With all my heart, sir!"

"You are very good. I trust I shall live to thank you. I am not clear yet; and, if you will believe me, this bleeding has taken away all my strength. I had seven veins opened."

"Your wounds are healed now," said Martin, "and you will be better soon. Take this cordial, and it will strengthen you."

Caleb was about to drink, but smelling the contents of the glass, he shook his head, and put it feebly aside.

"It is brandy," said Martin. "Before you slept, you made us promise to have some for you when you awoke. The doctor said if you should be very weak a little would help you."

"I am sick — deadly sick!" moaned Caleb. "But I cannot taste it. I have broken a hundred oaths in my lifetime — for I have been a wretched sinner all my days; — but the oath I made to Alice before she died — I will not break that. It is my last hope of salvation."

"Dear, dear father! here I am! — here I am, your own Alice!" cried the blind girl, flinging herself upon his bosom. "Don't you know me? — don't you know your own dear Alice?"

"I think you should be my child," said Caleb, weeping. "Heaven is kind! I buried you last week, and my heart with you. I am afraid this is but a dream for my punishment, my poor girl!"

"No, no! the other was a dream. I am indeed your Alice — your dear Alice!"

"This is your hair, and your face, — I cannot be mistaken in

the voice; and I feel your kisses and your breath. O, my darling! I have had bad dreams! They have left me very weak. If I had a little brandy to drink!"

Once more Martin offered Caleb the tumbler; but he put it aside again, after touching it with his lips.

"When I reflect what my life has been, I cannot drink! It seems only a month or two since I was young like you, Mr. Merrivale; and I had high hopes.—— Ashes — ashes — ashes! —— Take the brandy away."

The sick man slept at intervals during the night; but his slumbers were light, and the least noise in the room awoke him. At half-past two he called, "Mary."

"It was my mother's name," said Alice, with a stifled sob.

"She has been with me, but she is gone now," murmured Caleb. "She is coming again soon, and I am to go with her. Bless you, bless you, my child! You forgive your poor father, do you?"

The blind girl's sobs made answer.

"How the room brightens!" whispered Caleb, after a long silence. "It is Mary again! there! there!"

Not long after, Martin took the blind girl from his arms. They were heavy and cold. His lips moved no more. "Mary" had come for him, and they were gone together.

Only Martin could afford Alice any consolation. When the first burst of her grief had subsided, he folded her in his arms, and sat down by the open window of her chamber. The storm had spent its fury; the clouds chased each other across the blue; a few stars shone faintly, and in high heaven soared the glittering moon. And there the young man sat and looked forth, with the blind girl lying motionless in his arms, until the

east brightened, and the stars went out, and the moon became as a film, and the conquering day unfurled his crimson banners on the hills. Then gently he arose and carried Alice, sleeping, to the bed, laid her gently down, kissed her, and stole softly from the chamber.

Grief for her father's death proved a violent strain upon the blind orphan's slender life. But she did not want for friends; Miss Doane watched over her with a mother's care and love; and at the parsonage, to which she was removed about a week after the funeral, she was more petted than ever. Martin came out frequently from Boston to see her, bringing delicate fruits and other gifts to cheer her; and when he was absent, Junius and his sister filled his place.

"Come, my darling," said Margaret, one fair summer morning, "I have loaded my basket with good things, and now let us see if we can find anybody that wants them. Do you feel able to go?"

"O, yes," answered Alice, with a smile of pleasure. "I like so well to go with you! It makes me glad when you give to these poor people, and they thank you with such full hearts!"

"Junius will take us in the buggy," cried Margaret, with inspiring cheerfulness. "He will leave us somewhere; and when we have disposed of our load, we can walk home. If the dew is off the grass, we will come through the fields."

"That will be nice!" said Alice. "It does me good to walk, if I don't get too tired."

"Hurra, you fellows!" exclaimed Junius, gayly, at the door. "The twenty-three-year-old colt is waiting patiently. Is this the basket that 's going to ride? Give me that little hand of yours, Alice. Laura shall put in the basket, and I will put you in after."

"If anybody calls, shall I say you will be back soon?" inquired Laura. This was the fifth question she had asked with reference to the morning's excursion; but Margaret did not see fit to gratify her curiosity. "If you go by our house, I wish you would ask how mother is," she cried, as the party drove away.

"I don't think we shall pass your house," replied Margaret, smiling. "Laura is very anxious to know where we are going, Alice, — should n't you think so?"

"Why is she?"

"Can't you guess? You heard the doleful tale she told last night about her family, did n't you?"

"She said her father had been drinking again. He had taken all her mother's money to buy liquor, and beaten the children. It is too bad!" said the sympathetic Alice. "I feel so sorry for poor Laura! She is a real good girl, — don't you think she is?"

"A very good girl. She has lived with us nearly a year, and during all this time I have had no serious fault to find with her."

"Yet Mrs. Merrivale thought her obstinate and lazy," laughed Junius. "She warned you against hiring her, you remember."

"I have found her industrious and faithful," returned Margaret.

"Perhaps Mrs. Merrivale did not treat her so kindly as you do," said Alice. "Laura will do anything for one she loves; but I don't think she would like to be driven. I was in hopes you were going to see her folks this morning."

"So indeed I am, dear child. I told her I should not pass the house: it is my intention to stop. I am sorry now I did not tell her the truth, — she looked so disappointed. But we will surprise her when we return."

Junius left Margaret, Alice and the basket, at the door of a low, dilapidated tenement, situated on an unfrequented road a little back from the village. On entering, they found that Laura's story had not been exaggerated; on the contrary, the girl had suppressed many disagreeable facts concerning her father's drunkenness and the destitution it had brought upon the family. There were no provisions in the house; many necessary articles of comfort had been sold for drink; the children were crying, and trouble had made Mrs. Drake "down sick."

"Don't blame him too much," the poor woman pleaded for her husband. "He don't have these bad turns more than twice a year; and when he is sober he is kind and industrious. Poor man! he tries to resist the appetite; but it is a perfect mania with him, when it comes. Then they will sell him drink at the tavern, spite of all I can do or say."

With cheerful and encouraging words, Margaret emptied her basket.

"O, this is a great abundance!" exclaimed Mrs. Drake. "Don't think of sending us anything more. Miss Doane was here yesterday, and will be here again to-day; and she never comes without bringing something that we need."

"Has anybody else visited you?"

"Mrs. Merrivale honored us last evening," — Mrs. Drake spoke bitterly, — "but I dread her more than poverty. She is a good woman enough, for aught I know; and I'm sure she would not see anybody in want. But when she comes here, she is so patronizing! and then she preaches such long sermons! You would think she was Queen of Sheba, and we the guiltiest wretches in the world! She galls my pride so, that I can't help

telling her that we don't want her charity, and that she need n't trouble herself any more."

"You are a little in the wrong, I am afraid," said Margaret. "Mrs. Merrivale does not mean to offend; and, really, she has a benevolent heart."

The visit to these poor people drew out the blind girl's sympathies, and made her happier and stronger. She was now eager to hear what Laura would say when Margaret told her where they had been. The way home across the fields was not long, and, after a pleasant walk, they arrived at the parsonage.

"Let us go in still!" whispered Alice.

Margaret smiled upon the whim, and led her companion softly into the kitchen. But here a sight met her eye that struck her with amazement.

"What are you doing, Laura?" she asked.

"O, Miss Murray!" exclaimed the guilty Laura, turning white, "it is the first time — the only time!"

"Let me see," said Margaret. She drew towards her little Elmira, — a younger sister of Laura, — who had dodged behind the pantry door at her approach, and examined the contents of a tin pail she was endeavoring to put out of sight. "What is this?"

"Some sugar, and rice, and a little tea," faltered Laura.

Margaret had naturally a quick temper; and now the fire came into her eyes and cheeks as she held up the pail and looked at the wretched girl.

"Take it," said she, in a tremulous voice; "run home with it, Elmira; you are welcome."

"We only jest put 'em into the pail to — to see how they would look — to see how heavy they was," gasped the frightened Elmira. "We was going to take 'em out again."

"Don't tell a wrong story about it, sis," Laura broke forth, beginning to sob. "I was going to send them to my mother. Elmy was to tell her that you sent 'em — for I felt sure you would, if you had been here, and known how sick ma is. But I had no right to take anything without asking you. I hope to die if it an't the first time. It will kill me to have ma know of it."

"Wait, Elmira," said Margaret, shaken by a strong emotion. She bent over the child and kissed her, bursting into tears. "Never tell a wrong story again, my child, for anything; will you?" The child said no, crying violently. "There! good-by. Kiss me, if you love me. I love you, and hope you will be always true and happy."

Having sent Elmira away, Margaret turned and saw her sister coming out of the sitting-room with her bonnet on.

"Only say you forgive me, and I will go too," said Laura. "I know you won't want me to stay after this; I know I have done a wicked thing, and lost your confidence, as I deserve; but say you forgive me, and the shame of having my mother know it won't quite kill me."

Margaret led the distressed Alice to a chair, and assured her, in a low voice, that all would be well, then turned, weeping, and took Laura lovingly by the hand.

"Tell me first that you forgive me for being angry."

"*I* forgive *you!* I should not have blamed you if you had beaten me out of the house. I could have forgiven ten times more than that in you."

"And I forgive you as freely as I hope to be forgiven for my own sins," said Margaret, putting her arms around the girl's neck. "I forgive you, and love you still. I might have done the same in your place, — or a great deal worse, perhaps. I

should be guiltier than you if I did not forgive you. Now don't cry any more about it. We will forget it all. You shall live with us as before, and nobody shall ever know it — not even my father or Junius: only Alice here, and she has a heart as full of love and forgiveness as the sky is full of light."

These words brought poor Laura to her knees; she bowed her head and covered her face, and would not speak or rise till Margaret lifted her up.

"I never heard anybody talk like that before!" she sobbed. "I would n't have believed any one could. If I had been so good to you as you have been to me, and you had stolen from me then —"

"Perhaps you would not even have been angry, as I was at first, Laura. We must bear with each other. And when we pray, we will pray for charity, which is the dearest gift of God. Come, my poor girl. It is all right now. And I have good news for you. Your mother is better."

"Have you been there? And were those things for her?"

"Yes, Laura; and I thank you for telling me how she was situated. It has given Alice and me a good deal of happiness to carry her relief."

"O, what a wretch I am! I thought you did not understand how poorly off she was, and that you was n't going to see her — and I was too proud to ask you — so, as Elmy could n't get any berries, — they are all gone from the hill, — I thought I would give her something in their place. O, if you can forgive me, I 'll be so glad to stay! and there is nothing I won't do for you!"

"You shall stay, Laura, and you shall have a quarter of a dollar per week more than I have been giving you. I have thought for a good while that I did not pay you enough."

"I shan't take any more," cried Laura, quickly. "You pay me as much as Mrs. Merrivale paid me, and your work an't half so hard, — and I 'd rather work for you for nothing than work for her for a dollar a day."

"But I shall pay what I think you earn, notwithstanding," returned Margaret, with a smile.

"You have given me time to sew for myself, and let me read, odd spells, besides teaching me how to play the accordeon — "

"And now, make haste and get dinner, then you shall have the afternoon to visit your mother, and help her about her work. Let this seal our bond of union," — Margaret kissed her, — "and we will henceforth be the best friends in the world."

With what joyful alacrity Laura resumed her work! Never before had her heart beat half so light and happy.

"O, dear, dear, dear! If I could only be so good as you are!" exclaimed Alice, clinging to Margaret's neck, as soon as they were alone. "You have made me so full — so full! And dear Laura — how much more I love her now!"

The blind girl felt a deep sympathy in the experience of Colonel Merrivale's consumptive son, and at one time she often enjoyed his society at the parsonage. But during the sultry weather of August, he failed rapidly, and when the child, suffering from wounds of grief still fresh, needed him most, he was unable to come and see her. Then Junius and Margaret used frequently to take her up to Summer Hill, and let her sit upon her favorite stool at the feet of the dying boy, and talk with him about the spiritual life.

One day, when Alice, as she assured Margaret, felt "pretty smart," the two set out on foot to pay their accustomed visit to the invalid John. They went by the way of the burying-ground,

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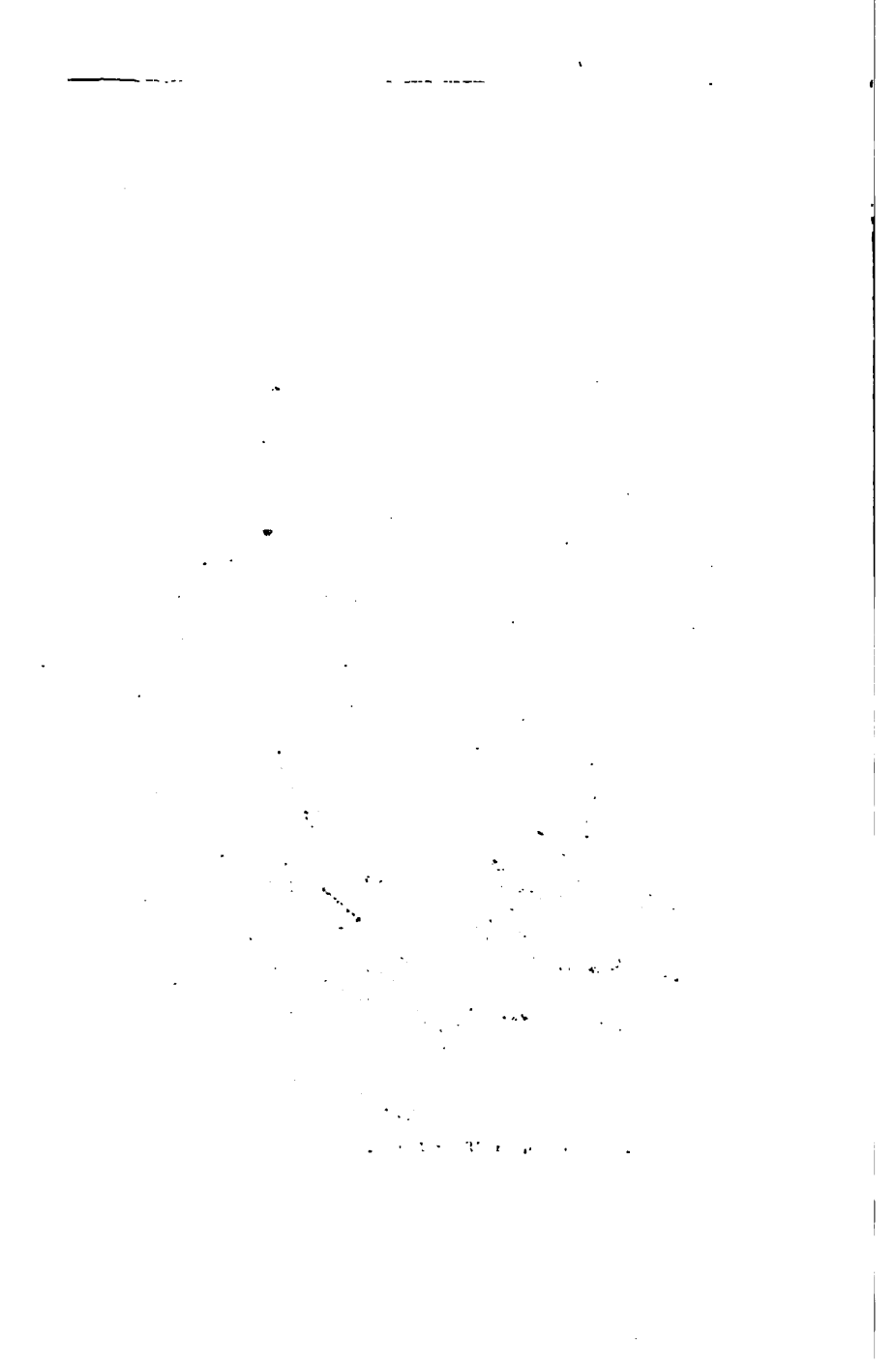
God's love. The best and purest of us here can only hope to



— a favorite walk, — and Margaret led her blind companion to the spot where her weary father had so lately been laid to rest in the quiet ground. Alice felt of the grave with her hands, measured its length and breadth, as she had done so many times before, then, laying her cheek on the turf, wept for a long while in silence.

"Why do you always choose that spot to lay your head?"

"I think his heart must be here," replied the child. "O, he had such a good heart! It seems to me I can almost hear it throb. Dear, dear father!" she murmured, embracing the grave, "do love your blind girl a little!"

"You know, dear child," said Margaret, kneeling by her side, "your father is not here in the ground. He is in a brighter country, just above ours."

"I know it; for I see him in my dreams; but it is as if the dear clothes he used to wear lay under this sod, and could hear what I say."

"You see him in your dreams?"

"O, yes, when I dream awake. He comes to me, and talks to me as he used to. He is sad yet, for something seems to hold him to the past — it is memory, I think. He was good, and loved God, and I am sure he has gone to heaven; but people don't go at once to the happiest place, do they?"

The child spoke with great earnestness, and Margaret comforted her with a thoughtful answer.

"Nature delights in growth and gradual development. Death is only a change of scene and circumstance to the soul. It enters the other world as it leaves this; but there it finds a better soil to grow in, and I think no clouds come to intercept the sunshine of God's love. The best and purest of us here can only hope to

enter the lower societies of heaven — but then, if we will, what joyful and glorious progression we may make!"

"O, if we could always see these things as clearly!" said Alice. "Only love and goodness make us truly happy; and it seems to me that when our hearts are right, we enter heaven here."

In a little while the child asked to be led to the grave of Margaret's mother, which was not far off. There the grass was wilder and longer, and the flowers planted there had bloomed and shed their tiny seeds through the circles of four revolving years.

"I wonder," whispered Alice, putting her face in the grass, and clasping Margaret's hand with a sudden impulse — "I wonder if your mother knows my mother, in the spirit world! They would love each other, I am sure! Don't tell any one, but I have seen them together more than once. The last time was when you prayed with me, night before last. They had their arms around each other, and my mother held a basket of flowers, while your mother scattered them all over and around us. I never saw anything so bright and happy as their faces were."

When Margaret thought her companion was sufficiently rested, so that she could finish the excursion without fatigue, they left the burying-ground; and not long after the blind girl's feet trod the pleasant walks of Summer Hill. In the garden they met Louise, whose eyes showed traces of recent tears.

"O, nothing new," cried the young lady, when Margaret asked what ailed her. "It 's the same old story. I don't see a happy hour in the twenty-four."

"So near your marriage, too?" said Margaret, seriously.

"Somehow, it don't make me happy to think of that. There is something here that keeps swelling up — swelling up" — Lou-

ise put her hand upon her heart, while her eyes filled with tears — "and nothing but death will ever put it down. Every day I wish I was dead. I shall see no peace until I am."

"At your age!" returned Margaret, sadly. "O, Louise, my dear girl, there is something wrong."

"It is all wrong. Nothing has been right with me since the day I was born. O, dear, Margaret! you don't know anything about it! There! I have said all I shall say. Go in and talk with John; he will be glad to see you."

"How is he to-day?"

"No better. He will be with us only a little while," said Louise, calmly. "I don't grieve for him — I shall not. I think he is fortunate. I only wish I was in his place — as peaceful and happy, going into my grave! Come in. Are you well to-day, Alice?"

"Pretty well," said the pensive child, in a voice so low as to be scarcely audible.

They found John sitting in an easy-chair, with pillows at his back — his father by his side reading to him. His pale face lighted up with pleasure at sight of his friends; he took a holy kiss from Margaret, and gave one as pure to her blind companion; then the colonel abandoned his seat to the former, while Louise brought the favorite stool for Alice to sit upon at the sick boy's feet.

"What strange books John makes me read to him!" said the colonel, placing a volume in Margaret's hand. "This is all about spirits, divine law, compensation, and the grandeur of the soul. It is one Junius loaned him. He goes into ecstacies over it; although, I must confess, the writer's wisdom is often nonsense to me."

"To me it is clear as sunshine!" cried John.

"I suppose I have owl's eyes; I cannot endure the pure light," returned the colonel, as he left the room. He spoke with apparent cheerfulness; but the moment he was alone, his face contracted with grief, and he went into his chamber to weep, because all his ambition, love and wealth could not save that son from death.

"It is four days since you have been here," then said John to the visitors, with touching pathos. "I want you to come oftener, — if you like to; for I shall be here only a little while longer."

"You know that I like to come, John," answered Margaret, with emotion. "And Alice — it does her good to feel your sphere; she calls it seeing you; and indeed I think she sees you better than most people do."

"I hope she does; she is blind indeed if she does not," said John. "Few understand me; therefore few care to see me, and there are very few I care to see."

"You, and Alice, and Junius are his favorites," remarked Louise. "As for me, I don't think I should be missed if I never came near him."

"You know it is not so," cried John, with an expression of pain. "It is true, I find fault with you very often; but it is because I feel all your irritations when you come near me, and I would have you pluck out those thorns and bury them."

"If I would, there is some one to drive them in again, as you know. O, John!" — Louise wept upon his neck, — "I shall remember all you have said to me. Some day it may do me good. But now it only burns me."

"My sister! my sister!" said John, in a choked voice, with his affectionate arms around her neck — "God bless you! God bless you!"

He could say no more, and the two wept together. They were interrupted by Mrs. Merrivale, who, entering the room with her usual energy of movement, came upon them before Louise could disengage herself from her brother's embrace.

"Louise, I want to speak with you," she said, scarcely observing the presence of Margaret and Alice.

"I might have expected you about this time," replied the daughter, sourly, following her to another room.

"Why do you conduct with John in this way?" Mrs. Merrivale demanded, censoriously. "Don't you see you make him low-spirited? Besides, you do yourself no good. You spoil your beauty crying so much."

"My beauty!" sneered Louise, with angry contempt. "I hate it, as I hate everything else. It has been no friend to me. I would cry it all into the dust, and be glad to, if that would cure the heartache. It always makes me better to talk with John, — and if I can cry with him, I take it as a good sign; it shows that I am not altogether hardened and selfish, as I often think I am."

"I won't have it!" retorted the mother, with sharp determination. "I promised Mr. Milburn that I would take care of you."

"Mr. Milburn? O, monstrous! You take care of me for that man!" And Louise added a remark which might not have sounded musically sweet to the ear of her future husband. Her mother became his apologist; spoke soothingly of his faults; and said she had the best assurance that he had repented. "Repented!" echoed Louise, with a bitter laugh. "When that man does repent, I think sackcloth and ashes, as they say, will be scarce for a season."

"If you think him so bad, how can you marry him?"

"What a question at this late day! You know that, hate him as you will, there is a fascination about him you cannot resist. I know I don't love him — but he has mesmerized me, and I go and come at his bidding, whether I will or no."

"It is well that you go and come at somebody's bidding! I was not aware of the fact before."

"The more I think of it," Louise went on, as if she had not heard her mother's remark, "the more I think the picture Alice described the first time I saw her, referred to me, and tells a bitter truth. As she sat dreaming in the corner, she suddenly cried out as if frightened; and when Margaret asked her what the matter was, she said she saw a beautiful serpent charming a bird, which, after fluttering over his glittering crest for a long time, came so near that he struck her with his fangs."

"There!" exclaimed Mrs. Merrivale, "don't tell me any more of that girl's crazy fancies. And now if you go back to John's room, remember what I have said. I will send you to your aunt's in Philadelphia, if I can't manage you at home."

When Louise returned, John was relating to Margaret and Alice some portion of his experience which he did not appear to consider proper for his sister's ear.

"Don't stop so abruptly because I came," said she. "I know I don't understand you as well as they do; but what I cannot comprehend I will not hear."

"I was telling them of something I have seen,—not outwardly, but inwardly," answered John, in some embarrassment, for he felt conscious that what he was about to say might sound idle to his sister's ears. "As I had not finished, I will commence again. I am willing you should hear it, if you will — only don't speak of

it to mother: she has already had sufficient evidence of my insanity," he added, with a sad smile. "Some months ago, when I first began to feel and know what the spiritual life is, I could see, whenever I closed my eyes, a star — right here," — John pointed to the centre of his forehead. "For days it was stationary, but at length it began to move; I watched it anxiously; and it came and rested over a spot where a young child was laid. From that time I saw the star no more; but I could see the child whenever I looked inwardly; and I watched its growth for weeks and weeks, as I had watched the movements of the star before. It grew up within me; — and now it has nearly arrived at the stature of a man. This bodily frame appears but as a shell to it, which is fast falling to pieces, as it expands and bursts it. In a little while this new man will be set free. You know what it means, Margaret?"

"And I do too!" cried Alice. "I see it all as you describe it. How beautiful! how strange!"

"What does it mean?" asked Louise. "It takes a spiritual perception to see such things, and I have none."

"To me it has a deep significance," responded Margaret, holding John's hand, with glistening eyes. "The star was the star of Bethlehem. The wise men of the east were in the intellect that followed it. The child represented the birth of Christ in the soul — then the development of spiritual life. How wonderful it is," she added, speaking with reverential softness, "that every circumstance in our Saviour's life and death symbolizes a spiritual truth! What was true of him must be true of our own souls, even to the death and resurrection, before we can merit to be called by his dear name. Is it not so, John?"

John's lips moved with a quivering motion, but no sound came

forth. A quick pressure of Margaret's hand, however, told her how deeply he sympathized in the sentiment she had expressed.

About this time Junius made his appearance, driving up the avenue in the parson's buggy.

"I was afraid the walk would be too much for Alice," said he, entering the invalid's room. "But if I intrude, just send me away."

"Intrude!" echoed John, greeting his friend with womanly tenderness. "Our circle is never quite complete without you. You seem to be a part of myself."

It was affecting to witness the meeting of those brother spirits. John's bosom was stirred by a deep and happy emotion, and the fine face of Junius shone with love and joy. A change came over the latter when he turned and took the hand of Louise.

"Still the same," said he, with a sad, searching look, as her beautiful eyes met his.

"Still the same!" she answered, with a forced laugh. "I 'm sorry the old style don't suit you. I 'll change it as soon as convenient."

"Can't you do something for that girl, Junius?" asked John. "She is tossed upon a sea of trouble; and I would that some potent spirit would say to the storm — 'Peace; be still.'"

"I might have done something for her once — as she knows," replied Junius, with playful tenderness, laying his arm about her waist. "But it is too late now."

"I am a perverse child; — that 's true enough. But I can't help my disposition," said Louise. "I know when you might have done me good — but I would n't let you. What are you dreaming about, Alice?"

"I saw a beautiful bird in a cage, beating its wings and tear-

ing its bright plumage against the bars. A boy ran to let it out, but it pecked his fingers, and would not let him open the cage-door. I am sure I don't know what it means."

"We will leave Louise to find out if the figure has any reference to her," cried Junius, pointing a significant finger at the young lady. "Come, girls, — are you ready? Good-by, Louise."

His manner changed again as he turned from her, and bending affectionately over John, kissed him, as if he had been a dear sister. "The Lord love you, John!" said he. "It is the best wish I have for my best beloved. Good-by."

XXX.

PERSONAL DEVELOPMENTS.

SUCH scenes as these operated beneficially in drawing the blind girl's mind away from the contemplation of her private sorrows. And so the river of her life flowed on; the last great grief that had fallen into the waters had sunk below the surface; the chasm had closed up, the convulsion of waves had ceased; and although the rock with its sharp edges still breasted the current of the stream, it still swept smoothly along, over and around it, mirroring the grassy banks and green trees of beauty that smiled upon its windings, and the pure blue sky of infinite love that lay above it, a deep and peaceful heaven. Leaving Alice, therefore, in the care of her kind friends at the parsonage, let us glance briefly at some other friends of hers, whom it is desirable that the reader should not quite forget.

First, a word about Martin and his literary prospects. These had improved rapidly during the summer; so that, in the month of October, — one year from the day he travelled on foot into

Boston, in company with Cheesy and Caleb Thorne and Alice, with the Beggar of Bagdad on his back, — he found himself one of the most popular of the young writers then coming into notice. He had become a favorite with the better class of newspaper readers, besides making himself a respectable name in the magazines: his articles were always salable, and nearly all of them, when published, "went the rounds of the press." Yet, even with this success, Martin found his profession hard and precarious. True, when the inspiration to write seized him strongly, he could dash off, in a fine frenzy, an article that would pay him from five to ten dollars a day — sometimes more — for the time occupied in its composition. But the tide does not always flow: ebb and low water must have place. Earth does not flower with perpetual harvests; there must be a seed-time, and a winter of barrenness. The same law of nature extends from lowest material things even into the intellectual and moral regions. As with the sea and its tides, as with the earth and its harvests, so with the mind. The mechanic may pursue his trade at all times; so there are some writers who can hammer out their tasks one hour as well as another; but he who would let the spirit of nature flow through him into his works must, like the farmer and sailor, be a student of the stars, a weather-watcher, and a server of seasons and tides. It took Martin months to learn this truth. He thought the eagle should fly forever. Sometimes, full of health and vigor, he would seat himself at his table, — expecting the same joy of the imagination he felt the day before, to lift him up again and bear him on its waves, over the stormy difficulties of his task, — and find the waters stagnant. He could not understand the phenomenon, at first; and often, when his work was to be done, he would labor through it drearily, with disgust and pain.

But wisdom and faith came with experience. He learned to rest content, even when for days his mind lay like a desert, producing no fruit. Now up in the sunshine, now down in the shadow, like the side of the earth we live on, — he welcomed the spirit's night of darkness and rest, as well as its day of thought and light. But at the same time he could not earn so much money with his pen as Mr. Drove and Mr. Killings, begrudging what they paid him, supposed. He somehow gained a livelihood, — nothing more. He wrote an article, sold it, received his pay, and that was the last of it.

"You ought to own a good copyright or two," said his friend, Mr. Dillistone, of the *True Standard*, as he complained to him one day of this state of things. "Why don't you write a book?"

"In the first place, I cannot very well spare the time," replied Martin. "Besides, I am not sure that I could write such a book as any judicious publisher would be willing to print at a risk."

"Go with me, some day," returned the other, "and I will introduce you to an acquaintance in the trade. I will see him first, and call his attention to your miscellaneous articles. Perhaps he will be glad to make a bargain with you."

Martin accepted the proposition with eagerness, and a few days after, he might have been seen leaving the office of the *True Standard*, arm-in-arm with the editor.

"Is this your friend's place?" he asked, in surprise, as they entered the shop of a noted publisher.

"Why not? You will not find a better house to deal with."

"So I should judge. But," said Martin, blushing, "this is not my first visit here. I am almost ashamed to be introduced."

"You are too sensitive," replied his friend. "Come along. The governor is in, I see."

So saw Martin also. It was the same polite publisher to whom he had first submitted the manuscript of the Beggar of Bagdad. With what distinctness the old scenes recurred to his mind! He wondered if he whose careless words, all in the way of business, had fallen like a blight upon the flower of his hope, remembered that epoch! It appeared not. The publisher gave no sign of recognizing the unsuccessful aspirant. He had probably forgotten his anxious face the moment it disappeared from his counting-room under the cloud of disappointment that overshadowed it. With him the affair had been a mere item in the day's record; with the young author it was a point in experience prominent as Mount Washington among New England hills.

"I have read some of your articles," said the man of books, "and have no doubt, judging from what you have done, that you have the ability to undertake something of greater magnitude, with no less success."

"I need not say," replied Martin, "that it would afford me great pleasure to prove you a true prophet."

"Well, sir, you may have the opportunity, one of these days. And I will say this much to encourage you," added the gracious publisher, —"that I never yet erred far wide in my estimate of what a writer can do." He touched Martin's shoulder significantly. "I have n't been ten years in the trade for nothing. I 'm no scholar; I graduated in a red school-house on the forks of the road, and could n't tell you Greek from Latin, nor Latin from algebra; but when you come to commonsense and business, you may find my word worth a trifle. When I say you have the ability, I don't mean that you can make speeches like Webster, or

give us great scientific works, like Doctor this or Professor that; but that you can write a book that our friend here can read to his family, and that I can sell."

Martin acknowledged the compliment with a blush, a bow and a smile.

"What we want in books is nature, nature, nature," the publisher went on. "You have that. There is no wild romance, no sentimental extravagance, in your style."

"I have endeavored to steer as clear of that as possible," replied Martin, with a smile. He thought of the Beggar of Bagdad. "I have had experience enough to teach me that in literature we cannot give our pictures of life and the human heart too much of the atmosphere and coloring of reality. True, we must idealize; but all our elements must be drawn from nature, and reproduced with fidelity."

"With a moral tone," suggested the other.

"I think literature should not be frivolous. It should be made to meet the needs of society," said Martin. "With so much evil in the world to be overcome with good, — with so much ignorance, wrong and slavery of every kind, to be combated, even in this land of boasted light and liberty, — a writer should not trifle. But I do not believe much in set morals; attached to fictions they may be precious as gold, yet a freight of such is death to the muse. I think, when an author's heart is pure, it will breathe purity into his books. If we look at life from a high point of view, and make our pictures true, the very essence of morality will enter into them, though we should paint vice itself."

"I like your ideas," observed the publisher. "Now, if you choose to prepare a small volume in the course of the winter,

I will publish it for you in the spring. Call in any day next week, and I will give you some hints that will be useful to you."

Surprise and gratification made Martin's eyes glisten. Yet he could not help saying that he was afraid the publisher might regret the confidence he saw fit to place in him.

"I have no fears on that score," responded the latter. "Only make a book to suit yourself, and I shall be suited."

"If I suit myself, it will be for the first time," cried Martin. "I have never yet done anything that seemed to me worthy. Often, before I sit down to write, the ideal before me thrills me with its beauty; but when I come to create tangible forms, it escapes out of them by some subtlety I am not master of, and immediately reappears in another shape, so beautiful and so grand, that I take shame to myself for my poor efforts to grasp it. What I *will write* is always noble; what I *have written* is shallow and feeble. I think now I can write you a good book — but if I think it a good one when it is finished, beware of it. I wrote a romance once; it was my first attempt at prose, and I succeeded so much better than I expected that I thought it a fine production."

"I have no doubt but it was very respectable," said the publisher, with a flattering smile. (He had most assuredly forgotten the Beggar of Bagdad!)

"It was mere trash," returned Martin, with a humorous twinkle of the eye. "If you had ever seen it, you would say so. I have never been quite so vain of anything since."

The publisher bowed his visitors out of his shop, and Martin went away arm-in-arm with his friend, as he had come.

"I tell you," said he, warmly, "I left this goodly place one

year ago with different feelings. I had aimed my arrow at the sun of fame, and came here to find that it had struck into the flat mud of utter failure."

"You cannot aim too high," answered the practical Dillistone; "but, sir, you must serve your time, and earn your credit-marks."

"And sit like patience on a monument, smiling at delay, if literary success is your ambition," added Martin.

And here we will leave him, in the flush of a fresh and hopeful purpose, and turn our eyes to other actors in this irregular drama.

Cheesy, meanwhile, is growing — a little in wisdom, and a good deal in inches. In other respects, too, he has changed somewhat since the day when he walked into Boston with Martin. If taller, he is less plump; his voice has lost much of its coarseness, and his cheeks much of their color; and his speech, if slightly improved in elegance, has acquired that quality at the expense of its vernacular freshness and force. He sports a ratan, and shaves; and, one year from the date of his inauguration in Sniffenden and Co.'s, he burst upon the world, in all the morning glory of a smart suit of clothes. This fair sunrise of gentility cometh not altogether unexpectedly. The early dawn thereof — the first faint streaks — appeared in the timid turning-up of his shirt-collar, the more careful tie of his neckerchief, and the oiling of his hair. Then came the crimson glow of a stylish hat and polished boots; and, lastly, the full-blown aurora of plaid pants and a snobbish coat. Here let not the prudent reader look grave, and hint of extravagance. None but the initiated know how cheaply our incipient dandies may be clad. The cost of Cheesy's entire outfit, hat and cane inclusive, did not exceed twenty-five

dollars; and where, in all literature, do you read of a hero bedizened at so reasonable a rate?

With other accomplishments, Cheesy has learned to smoke; and often, in the evening, you may see him standing in the doorway of some public building, with his hat tipped jauntily one side, puffing his penny cigar, and ogling the crowd. He has acquired a swagger, and displays a pinchbeck fob-chain of showy proportions. Yet admire him at a distance; examine not closely; criticize not. Remember, the butterfly is but just hatched, and, if there linger yet traces of the worm, let fall the mantle of charity and cover them. Regard not our hero's foul teeth and sallow linen. As he progresses in fortune and knowledge of the world, you shall see him patronize the dentist, and send large bundles to his washerwoman, in place of the one poor shirt and pair of socks, her present weekly allowance.

These external developments of manliness are not unaccompanied with a degree of self-confidence. Mature reflection convinces Cheesy that, thus apparelled and equipped, he falleth not far below the average excellence of gentlemen. True, at the first turning up of his dickey he sneaked out of his boarding-house, as if ashamed, and turned it down, disheartened, a dozen times during the day. His other personal improvements were adopted with not less modesty. His fob-chain he at first carried half the time in his pocket, out of sight; and when his new suit came, he put it on with fear and trembling, and blushed and grinned with conscious awkwardness all one miserably-happy Sabbath. But now habit has bred in him a feeling of easiness in his finery, verging upon pride. Let him not be censured. As a well-dressed man, he meets with different treatment in society from that which kept him so long an underling. Sol Civett, at the store, no

longer disdains to make a companion of him. The sleek Jenks, at the boarding-house, whom he formerly regarded with awe, has become his good friend, and they frequently leave the house together, after breakfast or dinner. How Cheesy's heart bounded with pride and pleasure, when that genteel fellow first cried out to him from the door, "Dabney, are you ready?" with a familiarity of manner equivalent to a recognition of equality! Mrs. Quilby begins suddenly to show him respect; he is handsomely used when he enters the parlor; and the gay Miss Cynthia Banks, discovering his good looks and other merits, pays her addresses to him over the backgammon-board, and in sly chit-chats in the corner. The good-natured Cargess, whose admiration for that young lady is coëval with her advent in High-street, falls into a state of gloom; he alone looks darkly upon Cheesy; but our young Adonis chuckles delightedly, knowing that he is an object of jealousy. What wonder that his head is a little turned?

And now the time has arrived for the achievement of a triumph which has all along been with him a darling object of ambition. It is something to win the admiration of strangers; but to astonish old friends, to dazzle eyes that were once familiar with your mean condition, to appear radiant and splendid in scenes that knew your poverty, that is the one sweet thing in the universe. So at least thinks Cheesy. He accordingly gets leave of absence at the store, buys him a new shirt, puts it on, and flashes like a meteor upon his native village. Shade of Brummel! how his bosom swells, as he alights on the tavern steps! It is a cold day, late in autumn, and the human flies which sun themselves under the old piazza in pleasant weather have disappeared, much to our hero's disappointment; but on entering the bar-room,

he finds them there, gathered about the stove, talking and chewing tobacco. A sublime idea strikes him. Pursing up his face with a look of conscious importance, and flourishing his ratan, he walks up to the bar.

"Landlord, ye got any good cigars?"

"Mr. Dabney! how do you do?" cries the surprised Boniface.

To be thus addressed, is too much for Cheesy's dignity. He chuckles perceptibly.

"Did n't ye know me? How 's — hi! hi! hi! — how 's all the folks? Got any Golden Lions? How are these Principes?"

"Fair, I guess. Where have you been, all this time?"

"Been in Boston. — I 'll take two of these." And Cheesy rattles his change upon the counter.

By this time he has become known to the company. Some greet him with eager curiosity; but the general sensation is not quite what he expected. He does not much like the manner in which Jacobs, the jockey, leers and winks; and the indifference of others, who do not move in their seats, but keep on talking the same as when he entered, casts a shade upon the glory of his triumph. He rallies, however, when Mr. Perkins, the blacksmith, — a man of character in the community, — comes forward, shakes hands with him, and calls him Mr. Dabney.

"You 've been doing pretty well, have n't you?"

"Well, — pretty well, I guess," chuckles Cheesy.

"What business?" asks the sedate smith.

"Hulsale store — Sniffenden & Company. One o' the most extensive 'stablishments in Boston — doing a prosperous business," adds Cheesy, with a dash of the high-flown.

"You get a pretty good salary, don't you?"

"First-rate! quite a lucrative situation."

"An't you cold?" — The grave blacksmith gives such a queer glance at Cheesy's dress! — "You shiver. Come up to the stove, and warm you."

"O, I an't cold. I 'd a worn my overcoat, though, if I 'd known we was going to have such a chilly spell. Pretty high temperature out here, compared with what we enjoy in Boston."

"It is colder there, is it?"

"O, no, a good deal warmer.

"Then the temperature here is lower than it is there," observes the smith, with imperturbable gravity; "I suppose that 's what you meant to say."

"No — yes — that is," stammers Cheesy, confused, and suspicious of quizzing, — "it 's some colder here. I guess I 'll run over and see Cole, the shoemaker. I wonder if he 's got any new ghost-stories?"

He makes several memorable calls, — talking largely, smoking, squirting through his teeth, and whipping his trousers with his ratan, wherever he goes. He patronizes his ancient mates, some of whom, in turn, lionize him, while others, possessing envious hearts and shallow minds, affect a cynical manner, and appear incredulous to the famous tales he tells of his Boston adventures. All are glad to follow in his train, however; and, thus attended, it is his delight to march up and down in sight of his step-mother's house. She calls to him from the door, "Cheseboro'! Cheseboro'!" in the same voice as of old, with a vein of surprise and admiration in it, and comes out after him; but, blind and deaf to her appeals, he returns, with tantalizing independence, to the tavern, where he has taken lodgings for the night.

Flushed with triumph, Cheesy, at a late hour, retires to his bed, flings himself about, sleeplessly, for an hour or more, muttering to himself and chuckling audibly, and finally falls into a dreamy sleep. On awaking, late in the morning, he hears a knocking at his door, and, hastily drawing on his pants, slips back the bolt. The door flies open, and in stalks — his step-mother!

"Why, Cheseboro'!" she exclaims, smilingly, "where did you come from? Where have you been?"

With all his bravado, Cheesy has been apprehensive of Mrs. Dabney's resentment ever since he set foot in the village; and her apparition at the door took his breath away and drove the color from his cheeks; but, gathering courage from her amicable manner, he now faces her with spirit. He tells her he is in one of the biggest stores in Boston, and is making his fortune.

"And why did n't you come and see me, my dear boy?" Mrs. Dabney asks, fawningly. "I kep' thinking you would come, and set up for you till the clock struck ten."

Cheesy, tying his cravat, mutters that he did n't suppose she would care to see him; he only came out for a breath of air.

"But you 're coming to see me 'fore you go back, an't ye?"

"I d' know; guess not; they can't do without me at the store longer 'n to-day, and I 've got to hurry back," says Cheesy, polishing his hat with his sleeve.

Her flattery availeth not. Cheesy is stiff; Cheesy is inexorable. Her fondness does but inspire him with the greater audacity to play his lofty part.

"Come, dearie," she pleads, "don't be offish; don't show an Ingin sperit, now. I 'm willing you should be for yourself, and I 'm glad you 're doing well; but I want you to appear a little like my Cheseboro'. You han't kissed me. Well, you can be proud and selfish, if you like. Do you ever see Mr. Mer'vale?"

"Yes, to be sure!" Cheesy arranges his fob-chain with an air of indifference. "Me and him 's great friends."

"Be ye, though? Well, he 's treated me very handsome, I must say: I never expected anything like the present he made me. I should be glad enough to see him. How did you come acrost him in Boston?"

This is too much for Cheesy's gravity. He says, explosively, that he trotted into Boston by Martin's side.

"I want to know! I thought of that; but in his letter he sends 'love to Cheesy,' just as if he expected you was to home, all the time. If it don't beat all!"

Cheesy roars with laughter. Thus warmed and thawed, he finds it difficult to reäscend the cold ice-banks of strangeness, from which he at first talked down to his step-mother. He becomes sociable in spite of himself, and promises to visit her after breakfast. So she goes away well pleased with her dear son. But, on reflection, his old resentment returns, and he is ashamed of having been allured, like a silly snail, out of the hard shell of his reserve. Besides, he has bragged to his mates of this his sublime revenge; and shall it be said of him, when he is gone, that he lacked pluck? "Not by a jug-full!" exclaims Cheesy to himself. Hence it happens that, when the good woman, beginning to wax impatient at the young gentleman's delay, heareth a wagon, she looketh eagerly out; it is the railroad carryall, and, lo! Cheesy riding ostentatiously with the driver, too busily engaged in conversation with that functionary to turn his face towards her house! The bitterness of that sight shall rankle in her bosom forever. Cheesy is revenged!

Other triumphs await him. Lacking the courage to go openly and call on his Uncle Jesse's family, he attires himself carefully

on Sunday, and walks up and down in the street by which his aunt and cousin pass on their way to church. How he palpitates and glows when, attended by a magnificent young dandy, they come out of the house, and meet him with no sign of recognition! But he has been seen; and, at a second rencontre, Sophronia and her mother regard him with looks of interest, which ripen gradually into intelligence. He is passing by with stoical indifference, when they stop him, and he is honored with an introduction to Mr. Tiplilly, who is very friendly. But Cheesy is excited, and, spite of his goodly outside, his aunt and cousin find him simply amusing; and it is this quality which procures for him, from the gay Sophronia, an invitation to call at the house. This is one triumph; but a greater than this is in reserve; it comes to pass when he is presented to his cruel uncle! Mr. Dabney's ill humor on the occasion is by no means flattering; but Cheesy has shown him that he can get on in the world without his patronage; and, long after, he delights himself with the inward assurance that the old miser must have observed his fob-chain.

It is impossible to say how much the development of Cheesy has depended upon his acquaintance with the Grayle family. It was in the old book-keeper's house that he was first brought out. The companionship of the children, the kindness of the parents, and Uncle Joe's familiarity, served to wear off his bashfulness, and inspire him with self-reliance; but, more than all, his admiration of Ellen, together with the sad stories the remorseful carpenter told of his youthful gallantry and extravagance of dress, gave an impulse to his social ambition. And now, in the day of his prosperity, he remembers his old friends. He turns from the smiles of the gay Miss Banks to catch a ray from the beaming countenance of Ellen; and he prefers honest Uncle Joe to the

genteel Jenks. Although the family has in the mean time seen sore trouble, he has stood by them manfully. When poor Clara was brought home, and laid upon a bed from which she never rose up more; when Mrs. Grayle appeared quite broken-hearted, and her husband was more cast down than ever; when a shadow rested on Ellen, and the children's mirth was hushed in the general distress, and Uncle Joe's "merry quips were o'er," for a season; when George Leviston, who could in no manner be prevailed upon to see the wreck of her he once had loved, came every day to the door, to hear how she was, and to bring such trifles as he thought might conduce to her happiness or comfort; — then Cheesy proved faithful — then Cheesy, with all his little faults of cowardice and vanity, felt some honest throbs of heart that did him credit. And when Clara sank in the dread gulf of the past, and the waves of time closed over her forever, and the home she had dishonored was filled with mourning, the sympathy he showed won for him a deeper love, a more sincere respect, than all the tinsel foppery of the world could have purchased. But the wounds of the heart heal fast; and once more, when the blustering wintry nights have come again, Cheesy meets a cheerful circle at Mr. Grayle's, where Uncle Joe's good humor floweth as of old.

"My sakes!" says the carpenter, turning the full moon of his countenance upon Cheesy and Benjie, "how these jolly evenin's remind me of my younger days, when I used to take delight in seein' theatre-plays! I don't know what wickedness I have n't been up to, in my time! Take warnin' by me, boys, and beware of theatres. There was no end to the tricks I used to invent for raisin' the money to buy tickets, and gett'n' off when night come, unbeknown to the boss. I boarded with him;

and, I tell ye, I sometimes had to work it pretty shrewd. But generally all day I was lottin' on goin' to the theatre in the evenin'; and when I 'd got my mind sot on anything, I never liked to be disappinted. I 'm ashamed to think o' them 'ere tricks, Benjie," adds Uncle Joe, with solemn self-reproach, "and you can't conceive the horror I feel when I remember what the plays was I was so fond of!"

Yet the jovial carpenter will give ample details of those tricks, for the delight of the boys, and excite their imagination by glowing accounts of those wicked plays. In this manner it comes about that Cheesy must gratify a certain curiosity that burns within him to see the foot-lights of a theatre. His first play is Jack Sheppard. It opens a new era in his existence. The hero's daring adventures thrill him with intense excitement, and in the whirl and giddiness of the hour he resolves, first, to become a highwayman; next, to go upon the stage, and be an actor; and, finally, to learn grammar and spelling, in order to write a powerful drama, founded upon Alphiddi and Lillifoo, in the Beggar of Bagdad — the hero to be a robber, instead of a mendicant. Aside from these schemes, the entertainment results in a wild passion for play-going, and for a time Cheesy spends all his meagre earnings in that sport. He falls in with companions who teach him that drinking is no less a gentlemanly accomplishment than smoking. He learns the sublime meaning of a treat. And so, like many another ingenuous youth, led first by curiosity and vanity, then by passion, he travels dangerous ways, over the treacherous quagmire of death. But let us hope that, like Uncle Joe, he may live to see the folly of his course, and, turning short around, become as sober and honest a citizen — yea, and as portly — as the pious carpenter.

XXXI.

COLONEL MERRIVALE.

THE marriage of Louise Merrivale was delayed by the illness of her brother John. Contrary to the hopes of the family, his health continued to decline, as we have seen, during the warm summer months; and when the first breath of the autumnal frosts whitened the ground, and painted the forest trees, and chilled all delicate herbs with death, no anxious care of friends, no strong and clinging affection, no power of wealth nor skill of men learned in diseases of the flesh, sufficed to keep alive the vital spark within him. Softly it withdrew; leaving decay to follow and invade its fair domain of mortality — the spirit's temporary habitation. It was in December that the final change — the divorce of the immortal from the mortal — took place. John's soul passed into the invisible spheres, at death's approach, as peacefully as the morning star melts into the infinite blue, before the glory of day.

After the departure of John, Louise was happier than she had

been for many months. His affecting farewells, his dear last words of love and counsel, had not been altogether lost. As she said to Margaret, she almost saw salvation. She lived a more interior life than ever before, often withdrawing beyond the reach of annoyances that had formerly held such tyranny over her. Her feet strayed about the shores and touched the cool waves of the ocean of peace. Yet she knew not the baptism.

Louise did not like to think or speak of her marriage. Something within her breast told her that she was entering upon a false union. She would have welcomed with outstretched arms any circumstance that could sever the half-formed ties, and make her free; yet her hand was pledged so solemnly, that she felt she had no right to withhold it when the final claim was made.

"Why is it," she one day asked Junius, "that poets never write so well after marriage as before — as it is said?"

"Some poets write better," answered Junius. "Others, it is true, never reach the heights, under the inspiration of wedded love, with which the unyoked fancy was familiar. I think much depends upon their companions. A true poet is necessarily filled with that subtle, indefinable essence, called spirit. If united by those most intimate ties of sympathy which marriage supplies to a spiritual wife, he will gather strength from her, as she from him, and together they will enter higher regions than either could do singly. But oftenest the case is otherwise. Observe these vases," added Junius, advancing to the mantel-piece. "Imagine one to be filled with fluid, and the other empty; then form a communication between them, and you shall see the full vase empty itself immediately into the other."

"Very well; but the one that was empty will be partly filled."

"If the communication be free, the fluid in this may reach the

level to which it falls in that. But suppose it to be incapable of holding any fluid? The other pours itself out in vain. I tell you, Louise, there are some persons to whom the spiritual essence, drawn from others, is as the dew of heaven to a foul morass."

"I am one, I suppose," said Louise.

"No, you are not. You are a thirsty flower. O, you need that heavenly moisture! But there are influences which will bring to your spirit only mildew and blight. We are fearfully and wonderfully made, Louise. How subtle the threads of law that wind us round about, and bind us one to another! The material mind will sneer when we speak of such influences, but they exist: — though invisible and silent, they are no less realities than the vivid lightning and the noisy thunder."

Junius spoke with the earnestness of faith, holding the young girl's hand, and looking deeply into her eyes, the while. Influences such as he proclaimed seemed to be at work at the moment. She never felt so drawn to any soul; never so powerfully even to his, before. She could only bow her fair young head, and weep. Junius dropped her hands, and turned away.

"Remember what I have said. I might tell you something more; but you are in chains now — chains that it is not for me to break."

"How *can* they be broken?" was the cry of Louise's soul.

"Only by your own hands. Good-by," said Junius. "I hope I shall see you free, some day. If not — good-by."

Louise did not break those chains. She saw the day appointed for her marriage draw near. It looked to her like destiny. So she kneeled meekly, and gave her passive neck to the yoke.

The nuptial ceremony was celebrated early in March. Lo, what a gay company honors Colonel Merrivale's house! The

friends of the bride and bridegroom have come from far and near to witness the happy union. There are some from Philadelphia, and some from Boston; among the latter, Mr. Tiplilly and lady, recently married, and very smiling and happy. Junius is present with his sister, and looks serenely on, as his father, the good parson, gives the pair his blessing, and prays God that there may be here a true union of hearts, — yea, and of souls, — as well as of the hands he has united.

"What God joins," says Mr. Murray, feelingly, "no man CAN put asunder. May you be so joined!"

How pale Louise looks!

Now let all care be forgotten. Give joy the mastery. If the minister cannot countenance the hilarity, let him depart. Let none such remain. For there shall be feasting, dance and song, in honor of the noble bridegroom and the so happy bride! Fill the glasses; let the generous wine go round; drink to Cupid — drink to Hymen — drink to Mirth!

But how pale Louise looks! How hollow her laugh! How thin and false the cloak of gayety she wears!

"Drink some wine, my child," insists Mrs. Merrivale, in a low voice.

Louise turns from her with scorn. Perhaps in this trifling incident we may find a key to the strangeness of her behavior. The two have had a difference — to use a mild word. It was on the subject of an invitation. Louise would have her cousin Martin at the wedding, but her mother — who, since the death of John, has shown an unusual degree of bitterness in her hostility to the young man — would not listen a moment to the proposition. Thence arose the unhappiest quarrel that ever strewed thorns between them.

"Come, come," the mother mutters, "don't show your temper before folks; be yourself now, if never again. Your conduct is observed."

Louise tosses her head, with visible contempt.

"Go to my room in a quarter of an hour, and you shall know the reason why I would not have him invited. I can give it you in three words. You will then be sorry for this conduct."

Louise answers that she does not care for the reason; other things trouble her more than that. Yet at the appointed time she will not fail to withdraw herself from the circle of her friends.

All will be well! so let the wine flow; give pleasure length of line; drink to Cupid — drink to Hymen — drink to Mirth; and in your joyous toasts forget not the noble bridegroom and the so happy bride.

But soft! what stir is this? What means this sudden check — this confused murmur of voices — this rushing of feet towards the stairway? Why does Mr. Tiplilly pause, with his glass midway between the salver and his lips, while the smile with which he was just now toasting the bridegroom is overtaken by an expression of wonder and alarm? Did you not hear that sound, as of a heavy body falling upon the floor above? Where is Mrs. Merrivale? Where is the bride?

It is the voice of Louise that screams for help. It is the face of Louise that appears, deathly white with terror, at the door of her mother's room, as her father and her husband spring up the stairs in answer to her cries.

Make haste! Lift up that form that lies so ominously still beside the bed! Give Dr. Pinworth room! The lancet to the rescue! Make haste! make haste!

What! no pulse? no life? Try again, doctor! You must

be mistaken, sir. Remember, she was a strong woman, full of rich blood and stirring vitality. Death cannot have brought her down at one fell stroke! Why, it required a twelve-month's siege for him to sap and undermine the weak fortress of her son's life, and here she lies, levelled at the first onset!

"Consumption is slow," saith the wise Pinworth; "but these heart diseases are often quick and terrible."

Quick and terrible, indeed! Mrs. Merrivale never mounted those stairs with greater energy; but, at the top, the life-spring snapped, and she fell dead at her daughter's feet.

How wondrous is this miracle of existence! Who knows aught of the ways of Providence? Had this sudden cutting-down of womanhood occurred an hour earlier, our eyes of sense might see a meaning in it. Louise would have been saved the fate that awaits her, — that mother's poisonous influence withdrawn, she never would have become the wife of Theodore Milburn. As it is, this tragic interruption of the wedding festivities seems but a freak of Destiny.

A little stir, and all is over! Behold yon brave old oak in the meadow: of what goodly stature! how strong and lasting! how indispensable to the landscape! Hew it down, and how empty the sky! Yet in a few days, the eye growing accustomed to the changed aspect of the field, the oak is not missed — the landscape is as perfect as before. Thus the proud woman of the world passeth; the little gap that her late presence filled closeth forever; and her name becometh a memory. Dear God! and is this all of life?

So Louise goes to Philadelphia to take possession of the new home prepared for her by her dear Theodore. Enviable successor to poor Clara Grayle! But she, thanks to family wealth and

pride, hath secured the place on rather better terms than were granted to that more fond and trusting creature; so shall she be honorably received in circles where the other's despised face could not be shown. And now behold the display of Mr. Milburn's new bargain! Louise makes a superbly beautiful bride — the admiration of the world, her husband's pride, and the joy, mayhap, of her dear doting mother watching over her! She hath no time now for spiritual growth. When the body must be clothed and the senses fed, under the tyrannous rule of fashion and pleasure, nakedness and starvation befall the soul. Yet is not this brilliant creature happy? What mean those sighs which chafe her restless bosom — those tears that fall so passionately? Is her heart still unsatisfied?

Summer Hill is left desolate. Only Colonel Merrivale paces up and down its lonely walks. A shadow rests on him, as on the house. His heart is like its chambers — empty and voiceless; the lights are out, the guests are gone. A few of his old friends — smooth men of the world, shrewd politicians, jovial companions — visit him and drink his wine; but they find him changed, and come but once. He finds them changed, too, and does not care to have them come again. Their low ambition — their false philosophy of life, void of conscience, principle and humanity — has lost its charms; it brings sickness and shame to his heart. So he remains alone, thoughtful, pacing up and down.

Not that he mourns overmuch for his lost mate; he is not so dove-like — she was not so dear: — nor has the marriage of Louise blotted out his life's sunshine. The death of John, in whom his hopes were centred, was a crushing stroke, but after it had passed he rose up and smiled. But these and other circumstances combined have served to turn his eyes within himself.

His loneliness, like the hush of night, brings meditation and remorse to his soul. Solitude opens the awful court of conscience, and brings up the faithful witnesses of memory out of the past. The waters of society shut off, dark rocks and rotten logs of the heart, hidden beneath the turgid stream, appear in all their naked hideousness.

Colonel Merrivale seldom prolonged his walks beyond the precincts of his private grounds; but one evening he ordered his phaeton, and drove to a lonely spot on an obscure road, back from the village.

"Here — take the reins," said he to the coachman, who accompanied him. "I shall walk home."

The man drove away, just as the moon, as yet unrisen, was lighting up the east with streaks of fire. Left alone, the colonel crossed an uneven field, and entered a woodland on the south. The night was still, the grove was wrapped in gloom, and the dry leaves and twigs crackled beneath his feet as he walked on. Stopping from time to time to listen in the silence, he at length reached an opening that looked out upon a hilly pasture, and an orchard and farm-house, dimly visible, beyond. On either side were thickets; and here, in the deep gloom, he made a final pause, listening again intently, and straining his eyes to penetrate the obscurity of the hill-side that lay before him. He seemed waiting for some one; and after a while he waxed impatient; occasionally he fetched a deep breath; now he paced to and fro in the open space between the thickets; then he walked out to a point where the soaring moon, low, and large, and red, could be seen afar off over the misty plain, and attempted to read his watch-dial by its faint light. Finally, buttoning his surtout more closely about him, — for the evening air was chill, — he turned

to sit down upon the trunk of a fallen tree, within the opening. As he did so, he beheld, on the right, a dark figure coming towards him, almost noiselessly, close under cover of the thicket. He sprang forward to meet it: the figure — it was a female form — stopped, and drew back, as he approached too near.

"I hope you are not afraid of me," he said, in a low tone of voice.

"I am not afraid," answered the woman, — and there was a soft, solemn music in her words. "I come with a heart of trust, knowing no fear."

"What can I say to you? How shall I thank you? O, Martha!" exclaimed the colonel, shivering, "I have no words."

"But you must not kneel, Mr. Merrivale! Henry!"

"Let me be here a minute — at your feet. It is my place. O God, Martha! that we two should ever meet thus!"

"We must forget that we ever met otherwise," said Miss Doane, quickly. "I did not expect this. I cannot suffer it."

"Forget, Martha! You may forget, for I know you ceased to love me long ago. My untruth — my unkindness — killed your love."

"Will you — will you omit to speak of that?" cried Martha, in accents of pain. "We meet here — we should meet here — as strangers. Spare me the past!"

"You cut me to the quick," answered the colonel, struggling with his emotion. "I thought — I hoped you would reproach me."

"I have no reproaches. If I have anything for you, Henry, it is forgiveness — the full, free forgiveness of a heart that hopes itself to be forgiven."

"I never felt half my unworthiness until this moment. Yet I

have gnashed my teeth in the dust at thoughts of it, for many a year. There is something about you, Martha, that makes me, infidel as I am, and have been all my days, believe in God. I see now that, if I have wronged you, I have wronged myself still more. My selfishness has been the weight which, while it has sunk me into the filth of meanness at one end of the balance, has elevated you to the heights of true nobility at the other. By the side of your purity, my heart shows foul as sin."

"You pain me, yet it gives me joy to hear you talk so," said Martha, — and now her voice was thrilled with earnestness and moist with tears. "There is a God, and his laws are swift to reward and punish us, even here. O, believe in Him, Henry! His love alone can lift you up from where you are. But do not exalt me in your words or thoughts," she added, softly and sadly. "Heaven only knows how weak and poor I am."

"You weak and poor! What, then, shall be said of me? Martha, the world would call me childish, insane, to hear me talk in this manner. But I think I was never in my right mind before. I will not gild my rottenness over longer — at least, here I will not. You shall see me as I am! — O, if you *could* see me, Martha! Sit down upon this tree, and listen to me a few minutes — only a few minutes. Do I talk incoherently? It is because my heart is tempest-shaken, and it throws off the first words that come uppermost."

"Henry, I cannot listen to you! O, you give me such strange feelings! Spare me! Spare me!" pleaded Martha.

She sank upon the tree-trunk, faint and trembling. Her companion seated himself beside her, in silence. She waited for him to speak, but no words came.

"Do not weep, Henry," she said, soothingly. She laid her

gentle hand upon his shoulder, and felt his frame shake with the emotion he strove to suppress. "O, Henry! Henry! be calm. I will listen to you."

"When I think what a wretch — what a fool I have been, I am torn with rage!" he articulated. "I never loved but you. You alone were necessary to my happiness. You were a treasure worth the world. And I threw you away! I did not know how I was blessed, until I trampled Heaven's choicest blessing beneath my feet, and crowned myself with a curse. You weep too! You sob, Martha. Do not for me. I am not worth the pain."

"It is not altogether with pain that I weep. I am glad — I am glad, Henry! I have looked at you so often, and so often, when you have appeared to go further and further from me, to grow colder and colder, that I thought I could meet you here without a tear. You seemed to have become a mere man of the world, and I regarded you as another being — as a shadow of what you had been — as a stranger. But to-night you are so much as you used to be! I see the same heart, with the same warm impulses, which I thought buried in the dust of worldliness long ago. I am glad, I am glad it is no worse!"

"And did you think that all these years I was careless of what I had done? I have endeavored in vain to stifle conscience. I might have done it, — I might have made myself believe that I had been only a little unwise and indiscreet, — but to live within sight of your pure and patient life has been no idle lesson, Martha! O, can you conceive what I have felt, when I have seen your meek behavior, and watched the brightening of your face from day to day, and heard your praises spoken? It was as if some flower that I had plucked, and flung cruelly upon the wayside, had sprung up before my eyes, the fairest and most fragrant rose in

Christendom — its every blossom a silent reproach for my folly, its very sweetness a pain to my soul! And such dreams as I have had, Martha! How often, in my sleep, I have seemed to live sweet and peaceful days with you! To awake from such happiness, to the false, cold life I had chosen, was bitterness enough!"

"You must not — you must not talk in this way!" said Martha. "It was not for this that I answered your summons, and came here to-night. It was to speak of our child."

"Our child! *Our* child, Martha! — I did not need to be reminded of him. But there were so many things I wished to say to you! I can think of nothing now. I hardly know what I should say of him."

"Say it briefly, whatever it is. My heart is so full, at thoughts of him! — it will burst."

"Does he suspect?"

"I think not. But how I have kept the secret from him I cannot tell. Whenever I have seen him, I have felt such yearnings — my love has gushed out so towards him — that it seemed he must feel that I was his mother!"

"You find in him something to love, then? You would own him as your child?"

"Something to love! Own him! O, Henry! you know nothing of a mother's heart! A mother will love a vicious or foolish son — it matters not how corrupt and weak he is, if he be but her own. What, then, if he be good and true? God only knows what I felt, when, after years of doubt and agony, I saw him at last, and found his heart pure, and his mind noble and aspiring. I never, never knew till then what gratitude was! — He thinks you have been unjust to him, Henry."

"I do not blame him. I like him all the better for his spirit. To this day he rejects all compromises; he scorns money; he is independent as a prince. When I lay on a sick bed, I found him somewhat pliable; but now I can do nothing with him. He will not be treated as a child. Sometimes I have been angry with him, but I always end by loving him the better. And now I am convinced that either I must give him up entirely, or cease to deceive him."

"Then cease to deceive him!" exclaimed Martha. "O, there is nothing like truth! How much, how much I have suffered for the sin of countenancing this deception! It was a false sacrifice I made. But I thought I was doing it for his good! I know what anguish it will cause him to know, — for he has the finest sense of honor, — but it will be better in the end. The mystery weighs upon him now like a great trouble."

"Like a shell that will rend him when it bursts, Martha! But cannot the severity of the shock be lightened? I have been thinking of one thing — I tremble to mention it to you — I could not speak it, if it were not so dark that you cannot see my face. For his sake, forgive me if I pain you; and do not interrupt me until I have finished. There is but one way to make anything like a reparation of the evil I have done. That way — I say it deliberately, for this has been my deepest, dearest thought for weeks — I would adopt with all my heart. If you can forgive the past, and overlook my imperfections, and call up enough of the love you once felt, so that it will not be repulsive to you to become my wife — "

"O, Henry!"

"You cry out in sudden pain, as if I had struck you with a knife! But hear me a moment. It is not altogether for his

sake, nor for the sake of righting a wrong, that I make this proposition. It is because I love you with my entire heart and soul. You are the first and only love of my whole life. When we used to walk in this same grove, and you believed in me, my passion was but green; it has been ripening ever since."

"Say no more! say no more!" burst from Martha's writhing heart. "The bitterness of that green fruit is still on my tongue. It could not ripen — it could never ripen for me. Once, Henry, — once I should have been your wife! I gave myself to you with all the fervor of a girl's young affection. But you cast me off. You left me to suffer tortures to which a thousand deaths would have been but as a passing pang. And now, after all the agony of these years, you come to me to make reparation! to offer marriage! O, Henry! you know not what you say! you know not what you say!"

"Good Heaven! I have killed you! Don't, don't weep so, Martha! What can I do? what can I say?" exclaimed the remorseful man. "I knew that this subject would be painful. I felt my lips sealed — it was with shame that I spoke — and my words sounded foolish and guilty to my own ears. Forgive me, Martha!"

"Forgive *me*, Henry, for my bitter answer," said Martha. "I not only forgive you, but thank you. And I thank God that your heart is where it is. I loved you once — I could never think you all unworthy, and the testimony of this hour will be pleasant in my memory forever. But, Henry, I cannot be your wife. Our divorce is for all time."

"I might have known it. It should be so. I have forfeited all claim to your affection, esteem, friendship — everything. But I have loved to deceive myself — to fancy that you might retain

something of your old tenderness for me, in spite of all. You have refused two or three offers of marriage, which you could have accepted with honor; and I — poor fool! — dreamed that I might be the cause — "

"You were, and you were not the cause, Henry. No lingering attachment to you has withheld my hand from the marriage band. But of natural love I gave to you all I ever had to give. That is dead."

"I killed it!" said the colonel, unclasping his clenched hands from his hair, and raising his head, as if to gasp for breath. "Fool! fool! fool!"

"Marriage," Martha went on, speaking in a subdued voice, very earnest and tender, — "marriage is the most sacred thing on earth! To trifle with it, is like trifling with God. It is not a mere union of hands, — not a thing of convenience, not even of friendship and esteem, — but of full sympathy. I rejoice in the marriage of the young, when heart answers to heart; but there is a higher, clearer, sweeter union than that; and the spirit that has come into communion with the Spirit of all love will shrink from a marriage on the lower planes of feeling only. The soul must have its affinity of soul. Henry, there is no longer sympathy between us. We have been growing away from each other for years. No ties can bring us again together. I have a soul full of love — you know not how full! — but it is not for you. I do not think it will ever find an object among men. I am content that it should be so, and hand in hand with my beloved brother I will pace the downward slope of life, happy in a knowledge of my Maker, rejoicing in my Saviour's love. O, Henry, I would have heaven's choicest blessings rain upon your head; but henceforth we are strangers, as we have been these many, many years. I am

sorry your home is desolate; but it will be well for you that it is so: only listen to that voice which has begun to speak within you — obey it — pray to it — for it is God that speaks. And now, farewell."

"Must it be so, Martha, — must it be so?"

"It must," said Martha, rising. "God bless you, Henry! I could weep tears of blood for you, beloved! You are dear to me for our child's sake. Send for him; make your disclosure tenderly; — O, my poor child! my noble boy! — deal gently with him. This is for him." She kissed her companion's forehead, as he still sat upon the fallen tree, with his head upon his hands. Her lips were warm and quivering, and tears fell upon his brow. "Look up, Henry! The wide heaven is above you. All its peace may be yours. God bless you again and again! Farewell!"

"Let me walk with you to the house," said the colonel, in a hollow voice.

"No; I'd rather go alone. It's but a little way."

She gave him her hand. He covered it with kisses — and with tears. And so they parted, never to meet more. Never! never! O, heavy word! On how many a crushed heart has it lain like the cold, dead stone of a sepulchre! It lay so on Martha's once. Now its weight is on another's. And while her gray figure flits across the hill-side, in the fair moonlight, under the stars, the father of her boy plunges into the grove, whose depths appear gloomy and desolate as his own soul.

XXXII.

THE CROSS.

JUNIUS and Margaret were one afternoon at work in the garden of the parsonage, and Alice was sitting on a bench near by, with her lap full of seeds, when the stage-coach drove up to the gate, and a passenger leaped to the ground.

"The very man we have been slandering!" exclaimed Junius, dropping his spade, and hastening to meet his friend.

"Is it Martin?" asked the blind girl, eagerly.

"Yes, Alice, it is Martin," replied the mellow voice of Margaret, in its happiest tones. "You told us something was going to happen this evening. Let me take these seeds, or he will scatter them all upon the ground when he catches you in his arms."

The arrival of Martin was a joyful surprise for his friends at the parsonage. But scarce had the delight of the greeting passed, when he aroused their indignation by declaring that he had not ten minutes to stop.

"I am to visit my uncle," said he, with enthusiasm. "He has

sent for me; I am impatient to see him; let me go now, and I will return and spend the night with you."

"A fair promise," replied Margaret, smiling, — how her soft voice and softer eyes made Martin's bosom swell! — "but Laura was just coming to call us to tea as you arrived. You'd better stop; for your uncle has his tea very early, I am told."

"It would be a pity if I should lose my supper between here and the Hill!" laughed Martin. "O, there is no resisting the wiles of women, Junius! Beware of them. Here, take me, sweet ones! I am lost!" He gave one arm to Margaret, and passed the other around the blind girl's form. "But promise to send me off immediately after tea. That is all I stop for."

"Then you shall have it, and go as soon as possible," returned Margaret. "Carry his valise to his old room, Junius."

"I will take it up," cried Martin; "and you shall go and show me the way, Margaret: I have forgotten it, and I don't think Junius knows."

He tripped lightly up stairs, accompanied by the fair housekeeper. He did not speak, until he had entered his chamber, opened the valise, and taken out a book.

"I give it to you with joy, and yet with fear," said he, advancing to Margaret, with glistening eyes, holding the volume with both hands. "But you will be a gentle critic, I am sure."

"O, your new book!" Margaret caught it from his hands, and pressed it between her own, and glanced her eager eye over its external beauties. "I shall prize it so much! But why — why have you kept back your real name?"

"I thought the title-page would look better with a fictitious one. It is more pleasing to my eye, at least. O, Margaret! I

am almost ashamed of the whole affair. You know how hastily it was written. But the publisher was pleased with it, and I have ventured the publication."

"When was it published?"

"It is not published yet. This is an advance copy. I snatched it from the bindery and brought it straight to you. My only hope is that it may contain some things that you will like. You are the public that I have written for. If you are pleased, I shall be satisfied. Read it aloud to Alice. I am anxious to know what she will think of it too."

Margaret was so impatient to get at the contents of the modest volume, that she could scarce afford the time required to preside at the tea-table. All present perceived that something animated her, but only Martin could guess what. She kept the secret until he was gone; then led the blind girl to her room, where she had left her treasure.

"Tell me what it is!" pleaded Alice. "Is it his new book? O! I thought of that! Let me feel of it! let me kiss it! You will read it to me, won't you?"

"That is what I brought you here for, my dear child," replied the elated Margaret. "It was his request."

"Was it? My dear brother Martin! Read! read! don't tease me now!. I want to hear it so much! I am sure we shall find some of his pure and noble thoughts in it. Begin at the title-page — at the top! Don't miss a single word."

Junius accompanied his friend to Summer Hill, and left him half-way up the avenue, where they were met by Colonel Merrivale.

"I had quite given you up for to-day," said the latter, pressing Martin's hand with unusual warmth of manner. "My car-

riage has been twice at the dépôt for you; and I went myself to the village to meet you when the stage came in."

"It was not easy to pass the parsonage," responded Martin. "And, once there, it was not easy to get away. I will see you before bedtime, Junius."

"Perhaps Junius will walk in," observed the colonel. "He has not honored my house with a call since Louise went away. I cannot blame him, for I know not what attractions are left. I have myself become so rusty that my own friends desert me."

"I will not go in to-night, — I thank you," said Junius; and, without apology or compliment, he took his leave.

"How different from the world!" exclaimed the colonel, as he walked up the path with Martin. "I know those who will stand with their hats off, and lie politely, half an hour at a stretch, to assure you that they love you dearly, and would visit you but for this or that circumstance, over which they have no control! I am sick of such. If a man feels no personal sympathy with me, I would not have him express any. Junius feels none, and pretends to none, — yet he is a good friend of mine, too, and would do anything to oblige me."

"I think two-thirds of our so-called politeness deserves a different name," returned Martin. "True politeness comes from benevolence and delicacy of feeling. When we counterfeit this, for fear of giving offence, or of being accused of ill-manners, it seems to me that cowardice would be the more appropriate term. If simple truth could take the place of etiquette, there would be a vast deal more genuine manhood and womanhood in the world."

These sallies of conversation were not very hearty. It was plain that the minds of both were on a different topic. Yet they continued their walk for some minutes about the grounds, while the

colonel showed his companion what he intended to do in the horticultural line during the season. At length they entered the house, and the colonel called for lights in his library.

"You sometimes taste, I suppose," said he, smiling, as he unlocked a small closet and brought forth decanters, a champagne-bottle and glasses. "I have a variety of articles. Here 's Madeira, that has lain in my cellar fifteen years. For myself, I have settled down upon brandy, which is your only orthodox drink. We will first try the quality of this venerable gentleman's blood, however." He playfully stroked the white metallic covering of the neck of the champagne-bottle.

"'His head was silvered o'er with age,
And long experience made him sage.'

Do you smoke?"

"I neither smoke nor taste," replied Martin.

"Whew!" The colonel whistled. "But I am glad to hear it, sir! 'I know the right, and I approve it too.' What 's the Latin? — *Deteriora sequor:* 'I know the wrong, and yet the wrong pursue.'" He poured a glass of brandy, and drank it without water or sugar. "How have you managed, in your town life, to keep clear of these habits?"

"I have not kept clear of them altogether. I have been in company where cigars and wine were fashionable; where there was wit and good-fellowship enough to lend a charm to such pleasant dissipation; where even the ladies smiled upon it; and I have overcome all my prejudices, one by one."

"But you now abstain?"

"Scrupulously. I saw how gradually, but surely, I was fixing the habit upon me. In a little while I felt the desire of stimulus

whenever I set out to write. I paused to reflect. The experience of others warned me. O, sir, I know more than one noble soul ruined by this fiend of appetite; and I do believe that with many there is no such thing as reform. The bird may fly from the serpent that sings to it in the grass; but the charm once established, the fangs are inevitable. I broke the spell just in time."

"Any person will grant the truth of what you have said. The mischief is," said the colonel, "every one, at the first step in dissipation, believes that his case will be an exceptional one; he will take heed, and stop before it is too late. This is the way I used to reason to myself; and so I kept on reasoning, until I found it was not so easy to stop. I am but a moderate drinker; but, if I miss my regular dram, I am miserable; and, in spite of my resolutions, I am gradually increasing the strength and frequency of my potations. But let us change the subject. How are your literary prospects?"

"A little brighter, just now, than ever before. I am arriving at something like independence; and I trust that in a little while I shall be obliged to write only as the spirit within dictates."

"John spoke feelingly of you, just before his death," — the colonel's voice changed as he alluded to his son; — "he had a brother's affection for you, and wished that you might fill his place, when he was gone. He was grieved that you did not visit him."

"John — I loved him," said Martin, with a sudden swelling of the heart. "I should have come to see him; and when I heard that he was dead —— But that is past."

"O, he did not blame you! 'Father,' he said to me one day, 'I think you will miss me; you will be lonely with no son in

your house; I beseech you, transfer all my rights, and the affection you bear me, to my cousin, — he is worthy."

Martin turned away his face.

"He saw but one obstacle in the way of his wish. That obstacle is now removed. And his wish is my heart's choice."

Still Martin could not speak.

"Only your consent is wanting to the fulfilment of his last request. My arms — my heart is open. Here I am, a lonely, childless man. My home is desolate; the future lies naked as a desert before me. My political ambition is dead. I have nothing to live for. Without some object on which to centre my affections and hopes, existence is a burden to me."

"John should have lived," murmured Martin, struggling out of his emotion. "Had he been spared, had I been taken in his place, it would have been well. But so it is: the fortunate die — the unfortunate are left."

"Yes — I am left! *You* unfortunate? A brilliant future of fame beckons you. A goodly heritage waits to call you master. Here you can live, independent in your profession, and lord of your own actions. You unfortunate, Martin?"

The picture was not without its charms to Martin's eye. A paradise of all sweet things seemed suddenly to have been thrown open to him, and cool fountains, golden fruits, and rainbow-tinted flowers, invited him to enter. He thought of his poverty; of the dubious future; of Margaret, who should be a sharer in every delight; of Alice, dear as a sister, whom he would keep ever near him; and the love of opulence, inherent in our nature, overshadowed him with a power never felt before.

"John saw an obstacle in the way of his wish; you said it was removed. May I ask what it was?"

"It lived in the heart of his mother."

"She did not love me," said Martin. "I do not blame her. She had children of her own. And, sir, I would not willingly, even now, go between your daughter and her natural rights."

"Louise is provided for. All her mother's property was settled on her. There is enough left."

"I thank you — I thank you, sir, with all my heart! But what can I say? There is a whirlwind in my breast." Martin walked nervously to and fro. "You know — you know there are other obstacles than that you spoke of. And you know what I expected in coming here to-night. Independence — affluence — this is sweet; but to me there is something sweeter. I would know my origin. I would have this mystery of my birth cleared up. What is wealth, what is life, as long as I stand daily in dread of my own history — as long as this phantom of doubt moves ever before me? To know the worst is better than suspense. The uncertainty we fear is infinite; every hour it assumes to the imagination some new shape, some new quality of evil. It has a thousand faces, frightful as dreams. But resolve our doubts, and be the thing we dread as baleful as it will, half its power is shorn away; it is bounded, it is fixed, it has but one face, horrid as that may me. Sometimes I picture to myself that my father was a felon; that my mother was — something worse; that I may be a child of crime — perhaps an heir of the gallows. It is vain to tell me these fancies are foolish. Sir, you can have no conception of the cloud that descended like night upon my heart, when, visiting what I thought my native place, I learned that my parents — as I supposed them to be — died childless. One son, who should have been about my age, left this life an infant. I saw his tombstone — his name was the same as mine —

but he had lain there in that old church-yard some twenty years. Now, am I that son? Did I die? was I buried? Excellent witnesses testified that there was no mistake about it. I should be by this time mere dust, three or four feet under ground. But here I stand. I hastened to question my old nurse, who filled the place of my mother, until I was of an age to be sent off to school. She was dead; but her relatives affirmed that I was known to them only as your nephew, and an orphan. Then I appealed to you. You know what satisfaction I received."

Martin spoke with passion and tears. Colonel Merrivale sat with his head upon his hand until the conclusion of his vehement speech; then, with a sigh, looked up.

"I deceived you. I wished to keep you ignorant."

"Ignorant — ignorant of what? Can I know to-night?" demanded Martin, with the fire of impatience in his eye, and something like fierceness in his tone. "I feel all your kindness to me, sir; I am not ungrateful; but I cannot be trifled with."

"Sit down; be patient; and you shall know in what I have deceived you." The colonel mechanically poured another glass of brandy, and drank it off. As he did so, Martin observed that his hand trembled. "That infant Martin — he was not an elder brother, as I would have made you believe. He was your cousin."

"My cousin? And his father —"

"Sit down, and calm yourself, or I cannot proceed."

"He whom you called *my* father — was my uncle!" faltered Martin. "Then *you* —"

The ashen pallor that overspread his face alarmed the colonel. He sprang forward and caught him in his arms.

"My son! — you are my own child!" he exclaimed. "Will you own me? Can you call me father?"

Martin struggled feebly; his head was fallen on his breast; he spoke no word. In vain Colonel Merrivale strove to soothe him; he seemed quite conquered. But suddenly he aroused himself, and held his father from him, and confronted him with pale and distracted looks.

"My mother! — who — what was she?"

"The best and noblest creature this world knows; a mother to be proud of, my dear boy; one who has amply atoned for one unhappy error of youth and nature by a life of purity and love. You know her, Martin."

"I do," responded the young man; and there was a strange depth and calmness in his tones. "I have heard her story; I have pitied her sufferings and honored her virtues. And I have hated you, sir, from my soul! — But Junius told me her child died. — O, sir! — You my father! You! you! you!"

"It is well to thrust me from you; I deserve it. But, my boy," said the colonel, weeping, "listen to me a moment. O, be calm!"

"Away! away! — I smother! — A breath of air!" gasped Martin.

He broke from his father's arms, and reeled blindly against the wall. The colonel hastened to open a window; he led him to a seat where the cool night-breeze blew in upon his head; he approached a glass of brandy to his lips, and urged him to taste it. Martin put it aside with a feeble hand, hanging heavily over the window-sill.

"I shall be better soon," he faintly said. "Leave me alone a little while."

"I dare not!" groaned the colonel.

"What is the fear? I shall not swoon. I am not much

shaken. You see, I am strong," said Martin, with a ghastly smile, arising to his feet. "I am well enough; only I want breath. I think I will walk out."

His hat stood upon the table in plain view; he seemed to see it, yet his hand groped for it, as if he had been blind, or the room dark. Having found it, and put back his disordered locks from his forehead and cheeks, he covered himself and walked unsteadily to the door. The colonel took his arm, and accompanied him to the portico.

"Thank you," then said Martin, releasing himself. "The world is wide, but I cannot get breath in it as long as you are with me. This broad arch of heaven seems close and stifled as that little room, while your arms hold me."

"You are wild and desperate, my boy," replied his father, keeping by his side. "Control yourself a little. When I see you calm, I will let you go."

Martin appeared to gasp for breath.

"It is a small favor," he pleaded, like a sick man. "I ask it calmly and submissively. O, you stir a fury in me! Will you let me go?"

Still the colonel detained him, — gently, it is true, and using kind and soothing words the while.

"You need not fear for me; I shall not harm myself, nor any one," Martin resumed. "I am melancholy, but not mad. O, will you let me go? Something burns here like fire!" — pressing his hand upon his breast. "Well, then! if pleading will not do —" He flung his father off with sudden passion. — "Treat me as a child, if you will; but you must not anger me."

He hastened down the path. Colonel Merrivale perceived that it would not be well to balk him then; yet he could not for-

bear following him, at a short distance, as he moved off into the gloom. The last glimmer of twilight had faded; but the sky was clear and starry, and it was not so dark but he could keep him easily in view, and observe his motions. Unfortunately Martin at the same time saw that he was watched.

"O Heaven!" he cried out in agony, throwing up his arms, "send me blessed patience! Will you, will you leave me?"

"I will, indeed!" responded the wretched father. "O, if you could know my heart! Come back soon. I want to talk with you."

Martin was alone. He went down into the road, and supported himself by the wall; he laid his forehead upon the cold stones. He had been some minutes in that position, when his name was called from the avenue above. He did not look up nor move until he heard footsteps coming near. It was not his father's voice that called; it was not his father that approached him now in the darkness.

"Colonel Merrivale told me to bring you this outside coat, sir," said the man. "The night-air is cold."

"You are very kind," replied Martin. "Tell the colonel I thank him; but I do not need the garment. Do you think there will be a frost? I suppose it is late in the season for that."

"It is cold enough for one," said the man. "You 'd better take the coat."

"A sharp frost would play the mischief with your fruit-trees," returned Martin. "But it cannot injure me much. Throw the coat upon the wall here, — if you insist. Good-night."

The man departed. At the same time Martin walked off in another direction, leaving the garment where it fell. He heeded nothing. He climbed the fence, and wandered across the fields,

He came to a corn-lot, and threw himself on his face upon the damp earth. For half an hour he lay there as if dead, — except that now and then a groan of unspeakable heart-sickness convulsed him. At length he sat up. He brushed the moist dirt from his clothes with his unconscious hands, and, turning his head slowly, looked around him. Thick curtains of darkness hung on every side. No noise of human life, no sight of human habitation. A few night-insects piped their monotonous and melancholy notes, the frogs sang in the marshes, and at solemn intervals an owl screamed in the woods. He listened to these sounds, and thought of the world — the world that lay all around him, hushed and hid — the world that ate and drank and slept, that laughed and danced and played its awful farce, even at that hour, while he lay there, alone in the wide universe, beneath the stars!

The stars! eyes of the infinite! how strange their influence! He gazed at them from the ground on which he lay, until their serenity and grandeur and distance filled his soul to an insupportable sense of pain. "O God! O God! O God!" he cried out, with his hands and eyes raised to heaven. Once more he stood erect: he wandered — he knew not whither. Unconsciously his feet strayed into a swamp, full of damps, and bogs, and stagnant pools. The vapors were chill and noisome, the black tree-tops shut out the stars, and the wind moaned among the branches. Now he came in contact with invisible tall trunks; then over decaying logs, covered with wet moss or slippery slime, he stumbled in the dark; and often his foot sank with a dull splash into the foul water of some sleeping puddle. More than once he broke crashing into the sharp and brittle branches of a tangled tree-top, fallen in the swamp.

At another time these scenes and sounds would have filled his

mind with horrible imaginings; but he scarce heeded them now. He felt no pain from wounds and bruises of the flesh. When he laid himself down across the roots of a great elm, with his head and arms pillowed upon a rotten log, it was not from conscious fatigue; and when he once more resumed his dreadful tramp, it was with no definite thought of finding his way out of the woods.

Instinctively following a glimmer of light, he came upon an opening, and saw the yellow moon, not long since risen, breaking through bright rifts of cloud that mantled the east. O, wondrous orb! O, chaste and solemn beauty! Sweet, pale sister of the imperial sun! How often and how often, gazing upon that fair planet's cold, white sail, floating upon the starry deep of night, had Martin's heart been stirred with love and longing, and an inexpressible sad joy! But now, like all things else, the moon was dead: it seemed the ghastly corse of a friend once beautiful and beloved; the memories it called up were salt and bitter; and he turned away, holding his sick brain in his hands.

An hour later, Martin had found his way to an old and decayed orchard, within sight of the parsonage. Time and insects had destroyed the fruit-trees; they rotted where they stood. By the fences, partly of stone, partly of rails, dilapidated and down-fallen, clustered thick growths of sumachs and malignant briers. The moon shone over all; but there were spots under the thickets unvisited by any glimpse of light. In one of the darkest of these, Martin threw himself upon the ground; he could see the house of his friends, and a light in Margaret's window. By this time he had begun to rally his shattered faculties; he reviewed the past, he considered the present, he gave a thought to the future. He felt that all was lost — all that he had lived for, all that made life sweet; and there was but one resource left him

— to tear himself from every scene he held dear; even from this, dearest of all. Of his new book, in which he had centred many hopes, he could not think without sickness of heart; it was, as it were, swamped in his grief. But that was nothing; he thought of other things. The common crowd he recked not of; many choice friendships he could sever without much pain; but Junius — Alice! — Yet even those flowers of love, deep-rooted in his heart, he could pluck out, and live. But Margaret, who had grown to be the dearer and better part of it — could she be divided thence? — could so much go, and life remain? O, agony! Martin had resolved to be calm, to reason soberly, to act a man; but when the thought of her rolled its insupportable burden upon his soul, he closed his teeth and clenched his hands tightly in his hair, to keep from crying out in his torment.

I know not how long he watched the light in the window; it was an age of suffering to him. At length it was extinguished; all was dark at the parsonage; and on the black back-ground of his misery arose the fair picture of Alice and Margaret sleeping in each other's arms, so free from grief, so happy, while he, within sight, within an arrow's reach, lay writhing in his pain! He rose to his feet, and fell again heavily upon the ground.

Another half-hour dragged its heavy weight over him. He had not stirred from the posture in which he had fallen, when his soul was aroused to consciousness of outward things by the sound of footsteps. Then he heard his name timidly and softly pronounced. He turned upon his damp bed; he gathered himself up, and looked out from under the hedge.

"O, my salvation!" he cried. "Margaret!"

Before he could arise, Margaret had thrown herself upon her knees at his feet.

"What is the meaning of this, Martin?" she asked, in accents of terror and grief. "Why are you here?"

Martin could only say, "O, Margaret! O, Margaret!" bowing his head upon her outstretched hands.

"Speak — tell me! What has happened? Your face is cold! Your hands are like ice. Your clothes are wet. Where have you been?"

"I lost my way," replied Martin, with an effort at self-control, "and I think I got in the swamp."

"But why remain upon the cold earth, here? Come — come to the house. If you love me, Martin, come!"

"Love you! love you! — That is it! that is it!"

"Am I the cause? Have I done anything? —"

"No, no! But it is my love for you that makes my misery hard to bear."

"Your misery? What misery?"

"To-morrow — next week — I don't know when, but some time, soon — I sail for Europe."

"For Europe? I am glad, — for your sake, Martin; you have desired so much to go! You will enjoy so much, and return — "

"I shall never return, Margaret. I shall never see you again."

Martin's voice was hollow, but he spoke like one who had considered and resolved. Margaret trembled more and more.

"You shall know everything," said he, melted by her sympathy and affection. "I will keep nothing back. But let me feel your love for half an hour — let me have this consolation — before we part. O, Margaret! I can almost find it in my heart to conceal all from you; 't will be so hard — so hard!"

"You need not tell me now," answered Margaret, placing her arm tenderly around him, to steady his footsteps. "How you shake with the cold!"

"It is not with the cold," said Martin.

"Were you going to lie there all night?"

"I don't know. I had not thought so far. I wished to see you once more, but I did not know when it would be. How came you to find me?"

"I scarcely know. It is a strange affair. I sat reading to Alice, — she had gone to bed, — when suddenly she cried aloud. I asked her why she wept. 'The time has come!' said she. 'I knew it would be so. The cross has crushed him down. O, go to him, or he will die!' I told her she had been dreaming, and tried to soothe her; and in a little while she cried herself to sleep. I went to bed shortly after; I took the dear child in my arms; I lay thinking of you and of your book — when she started up suddenly, and called my name. 'Here I am,' said I; 'are you afraid?' 'O, no,' said she; 'but my brother Martin — my dear brother! You must go and find him. O, will you — will you?' she pleaded. 'I can tell you where he is. I saw him — I know I cannot be mistaken.' Her earnestness impressed me; and, as I could make no peace with her until I had granted her request, I got up. Indeed, I more than half believed I should find you; and I came out. I directed my course towards the spot she described, and heard you groan. You know the rest."

Margaret's narrative served for the moment to divert her companion's mind into a new channel of thought. By this time they had reached the house. She led the way to the sitting-room, struck a light, and kindled a wood-fire in the stove. This done,

she for the first time ventured to look at Martin. He sat watching her listlessly. His look was haggard, his hair disordered, his clothes bespattered. He had sunk to his knees in the black mud of the swamp; his linen was torn, and there were streaks of blood upon his face. Margaret was inexpressibly shocked at the sight; but it was no time to give way to her feelings. She brought dry garments, water and towels, for his use; and besought him to make haste and change his dress by the fire, while she went up to pacify Alice. He obeyed mechanically. On her return, she found him washed and cleanly clad. But the fire had imparted no warmth to his chilled frame. He shook as with an ague. She made him sit down by the stove; she held his icy hands in hers; she breathed upon them with her warm breath, and kissed them with her warm lips.

"My dear, good Margaret!" he murmured, — and now his frozen tears began to melt, — "how kind you are! Your love sends its blessed warmth through all my veins. I feel a glow of comfort. O, I shall remember this! I shall remember this!"

She took his head upon her shoulder; she pressed his cold forehead to her cheek. He ceased to shake; only at intervals a shiver ran over his flesh; a genial heat radiated to his feet and hands. Then, lying in that more than motherly, more than sisterly embrace, he told his story. He uncovered to Margaret's sight the horror and shame and grief of his soul. The confession made, he struggled gently to arise, but she held him fast. Yet no word she uttered; only the heaving of her breast answered him.

"O, Margaret! this is sweet, but it is terrible!" said Martin. "If you had dropped me from your arms, — if my mother's misfortune, my father's guilt, and my own heritage of dishonor, had thrilled you with sudden loathing, — I could have left you with

less dear and exquisite pain. But you love me; you cling to me in this last hour, in spite of all!"

"Love you — cling to you?" cried Margaret, impassioned, — "with my life — with my life — forever!"

"Thank you! O, thank you! But it cannot be. The burden I bear I must bear alone. Your pure, bright life shall not be clouded by my shame. Give me but this hour of happiness, and I will go content — I will worship your memory forever."

"Do you think so poorly of me?" returned the soft voice of Margaret. "When I gave you my heart, it was not for fair summer weather only; it was for all time. And, believe me, O, believe me, Martin! my heart was never yours so truly and entirely as it is this night. Go where you will, you shall not go alone. Whatever may be your sorrow, the half is mine to bear. But let me tell you, in all sincerity, how much your sensitive mind exaggerates the calamity under which you groan! O, I know what it is! Honor is dearer to you than life. But what is true honor? Is it not the integrity of the soul? And can that be blemished by any accident of birth? I read to-night in a dear little book, full of life, and sunshine, and love, something like these words, which I thought beautiful and true: 'A base man is not less base for being descended from princes; nor can meanness of origin stain the bright escutcheon of a noble mind. We ask not the river from what obscure sources it has drawn its grand and sweeping tide. Many are low-born in palaces; while Poverty and Crime have called Worth and Virtue children. Where there is great heart and great soul, there is true manhood, there is true womanhood, there is the image of God. O, then, let us turn our backs upon the past, and live in the present; let us bury yesterday, with all its honors

and all its dishonors, and rely upon the greatness of to-day; let us embody in ourselves all that is good and true and holy, and teach men by our lives that nobility exists not in birth and circumstances, but in the soul of man.' Is it possible that such generous sentiments are yours, Martin; and are you here, to-night, weighed down by an error of the past? It would seem that some good angel, foreseeing your despair, had leaned lovingly over your shoulder when you wrote, guiding your pen, that out of your own mouth you might be condemned! Your heart uttered those words, and your heart is right. It is your pride that now revolts; and your pride is a false pride — it is the world's pride, Martin. Shall we call your philosophy a mere dream? Can you think it and not live it? Will you suffer this monster of misfortune to crush you and your philosophy — rider and horse — together, when only a little courage is wanting to carry you through the struggle victorious? No, no, Martin! let us look to principle rather than prejudice; let us worship God rather than men; and as for this cross beneath which Alice saw you groan, we will lift it up with hands of faith, and place it on the roadside of life, where it may stand as a guide-board, pointing out the way of the soul's progression, through suffering and patience, unto perfect peace."

Martin made no answer, but, in an excess of gratitude, sank upon his knees before Margaret, embracing her hands.

"Let me kneel, too!" said she, with pious fervor; "and let us remember that source from which all light and life and strength flow down into our souls!"

They remained many minutes in that posture of humility and thanks. No words were breathed, but their spirits soared together in the silent ecstasy of prayer. Then, with their hearts stirred to their very depths with love and joy, and illumined with

a wondrous light, they sat and talked for hours. Margaret told her companion how well she and Alice liked his book, what delicious tears they had shed over it, and what delicate chords of laughter it had touched; and comforted him with the assurance that it could not but find its way, like an angel-guest, into the hearts of the good and aspiring, wherever it was read.

To other themes they turned, communing sweetly; and the waters of sympathy that flowed fell healing upon the recent wound in Martin's breast; and when Margaret talked to him of his mother, and told once more the story of her life, with tender reminiscences of the patience, and charity, and serene trust in God, she had displayed in all her trials, he could only clasp her hand and weep. Suddenly the cock crew, heralding the dawn.

"So late!" cried Margaret, with a start. "I ought to have sent you to your room long ago; you need rest so much, after the agitation of this night!"

"You have given me the rest I needed," answered Martin. "O, how can I leave you for a moment, Margaret? But I must —I must! My sleep will be to lie and think of you. What a night this has been! The most terrible, yet the happiest, of my whole life! It is all like a dream — a dream of horrors melting into a vision of delight. But I cannot leave you yet! Send me away — chide me — be severe with me, for I am but a child."

Once in his room, he threw himself upon the bed. But he could not rest. He went to the window, and looked out. The cold moonlight whitened all the earth, but the moon itself, sailing towards the haven of the west, was invisible from his window. A few pale stars looked down upon him from the infinite blue; — pale with watching they seemed, and paler still they grew as the east brightened. He gazed upon them until, their vigils ended,

at the approach of the great orb of day their gentle eyes closed in sleep. Over his soul at the same time there stole a calm; once more he laid himself upon the bed, and his thoughts, fading like the stars, withdrew into the heaven of dreams.

O, blissful sleep! Sweet opiate of the mind! healing medicine of the wounded breast! How like a miracle it wrought in Martin's troubled brain! It was as if soft vapors of the Lethean stream had taken him up from earth upon their golden cloud, and wafted him into Elysium. Too soon the cloud dissolved; too soon his eyes of sense reopened to the day. The bright sun was pouring beams of splendor through the maple tree-tops into his room, and in the yard below the hens were cawing and cackling in the warmth of the spring morning. He was amazed, but almost instantly the vivid lightning of consciousness flashed upon him; and, falling back upon his pillow with a groan, he clasped his hands over his eyes. With sensations like those of remembered sickness, he recalled the events of the night. Vague shapes of horror thronged his memory, ghastly as visions of disordered sleep: but over all there dawned a bright light, and in the foreground of the picture appeared the image of Margaret.

And, by her side, another image looked upon him with a countenance full of unspeakable tenderness. O, then it seemed that all the yearnings for a mother's love his orphaned childhood and lonely youth had ever felt rushed back upon his heart in an overwhelming tide! All restraints were swept away. The desire to know that love seized upon him like a mighty inspiration.

O, hour of joy and fear! Anxious and trembling, yet burning with the fire of a new-born sympathy, he hastened across the fields. Margaret, who had gone before to prepare Martha Doane for the interview, stood waiting in the door of the farm-house:

she took his tremulous, cold hand, and led him to a darkened room. There she left him; and there also let us leave him. Eyes of angels only should witness such meetings as that of the mother with her son. At the end of an hour, however, we may look in upon them. Martin is lying like a tired child, with his face in his mother's lap; and like a child he weeps, while, with her tearful features illumined by a great joy, she smooths his dark locks with her loving hand.

"No; I did not see your father all this time," — she thus makes answer to a question he has just asked. — "His father, — your grandfather, — who was then living, acted as his agent. It was arranged that you should be privately placed in the care of a nurse; your uncle Martin and his wife, who were spending the year in Italy, were to make their appearance with you, as their own child, on their return. I considered everything with a mother's selfish love, — your good name, your education, your future prospects, — and, although it was giving up more than life to let you go, I made the sacrifice. It seemed to me that God had summoned me to part with my idol. O, I was blind, I was blind! In those dark days I had not learned how much better it is to live truly before God and man, than to enact a lie. You became dead to me; the world believed you literally dead. I returned here childless, and in mourning. Of our family, only Jared was in the secret; and he, in his strong love of rectitude, disapproved of the deception. Afterwards, as my conscience became enlightened, that also disapproved of it. O, for that sin I have suffered, I have suffered inexpressibly, my son! I believe God has forgiven me now; — do you forgive me too!"

The speaker wept. "My mother!" murmured Martin, pressing the hand that fondled his locks. There was forgiveness in

the act, in the tones of his voice, and in the deep sigh of emotion that heaved his breast; and she went on with her story.

"Our plan was frustrated by an unforeseen event. Your uncle and aunt returned from Europe, bringing — what they had long since despaired of — a child of their own. But it was a sickly babe, and at its death it was still designed that you should fill its place. This part of the plan would have been put into execution, but for the mother's failing health, which rendered it impracticable. Her disease was consumption; once before it had attacked her, and the air of Italy had been resorted to with partial success; but now, notwithstanding her simple and quiet life in the healthful village to which the family had retired, death made rapid and fatal inroads upon her constitution, and, two years after the death of her child, she was laid in the grave by its side. Your uncle survived her six years, but never married again."

"I understand now," said Martin, "how it was that my father" — he shuddered at that word — "conceived the idea of educating me as his nephew. After his plans had thus far failed, with short-sighted policy he resolved to keep up the deception."

"Policy is always short-sighted," answered Martha Doane. "We are strong only when we build in truth. O, with what painful experience have I learned that lesson, my child! But there is a God, and he will sustain those who put their trust in him. Rectitude is an armor from which the arrows of the world fall off harmless. Believe me, believe me, my dear boy! and go forth to face your destiny with a stout heart. Feed upon the living Word which God speaks in every soul that will hear; and although hatred, shame and poverty, overtake you, your spirit shall strengthen and expand in spite of all. Loving you as I do, I would willingly give you up to suffer all I have suffered, if it

were God's will to purify you in that way. O, it has been a glorious compensation for all my pains, when, lifted up by a consciousness of his love, every worldly affliction, the world itself, has become as dust under my feet. But you are a man. It will not be given you to bear my cross. Yours is a lighter one."

"Last night it crushed me," said Martin. "But it is lifted now. It is strange! — I have had foreshadowings of this from my childhood! Alice, in her visions, has seen me with a cross. And it has always seemed to have some connection with — "

He paused, while an expression of trouble darkened his features. At the same time he involuntarily placed a hand upon his shoulder, as if the pain were there.

"Alice has told me," rejoined his mother, agitated. "O, my child! in more than one sense you have borne a cross! It was my hand that placed the burden of suffering on your neck. As if to typify that, you came into the world with — "

"Was it once a distinct mark?"

"At your birth it was perfect. O, I would like to see it now!"

"Why should not my mother's eye see it? I have been very sensitive about it, always; I have kept it concealed; and since I can remember, no hand has touched it, except Alice Thorne's."

Martin undid his neck-tie. Meanwhile his mother opened a drawer, and a box within the drawer, and took out a jewel. She held it up. It was a crucifix of gold, attached to a golden chain.

"This," said she, "was the last gift I received from your father. I viewed it superstitiously — or perhaps I should say spiritually, for many things which we call superstition are spiritual, as many which we call spiritual are mere superstition. Indeed, indeed the gift had a meaning he did not even comprehend. Truly had he given me a cross to wear! This of gold was a

type of a more real and awful one. So I interpreted it then; and such was the effect on my whole being, that you were born with another cross, the image of this, upon your neck."

With trembling hands she laid bare his neck to the shoulder; and there, indelibly written upon the white tablet of his skin, she found the hieroglyph of destiny.

"O, my son! my son!" she cried out, in wonder, "it is a cross still, but now it looks like a cross entwined with thorns!"

"It is an ugly spot," said Martin.

"No, no!" she exclaimed, kissing it passionately. "It is beautiful, — and so dear to me! Pardon — pardon me, my child! You do not know what a flood of feeling rushes upon me!"

She embraced him with unrestrained ardor of affection, kissing the mark again and again, and wetting it with her tears.

"This brings up the past so strangely!" she said, as soon as she could command her emotion sufficiently to speak. "It seems but a day since this shoulder was an infant's shoulder, and I clung to it with my lips for the last time. You can know nothing of that agony, Martin! I remember how prettily you smiled upon me when they tore you from my arms! I sprang to snatch you back and hold you forever; but they carried you away, — all things grew dark and swam before my eyes; and I fell down in a swoon. Afterwards I wished I had never awoke from that trance. My anguish seemed keener than that of any mortal who had ever suffered. But what tender mercies lay locked in the heart of the future, that looked so dreadful to me then! Even while I blasphemed against the providence of God, his dear hand held in store for me this priceless joy."

"How you have suffered, my mother!" exclaimed Martin. "O God! to think it was my father who wronged you so!"

"If I have forgiven him, cannot you? He has repented."

"I can forgive him. I am myself a sinner; I too would be forgiven. But I cannot call him father. I cannot fill his son's vacant place. I can accept nothing at his hands."

"You speak with heat, my child. There is fire in your eye, and passion in the tones of your voice. O, be charitable, be humble! You do not forgive while you feel so."

"Then must my father live and die unforgiven! Can I accept his favor, and live with him, while you remain here? That would be monstrous! No; you I choose, — I cast my lot with you."

"But if he should come to me and offer marriage," said Martha Doane, in a low voice, — "suppose such a thing possible, — then could you forgive him, then could you call him father?"

Martin answered fervently that he could. Then into his ear his mother breathed the secret of what had taken place at her last interview with Colonel Merrivale, three nights before. Martin was deeply touched. For the first time he pronounced his father's name with tender emotion. His heart was made lighter and happier; and he wept.

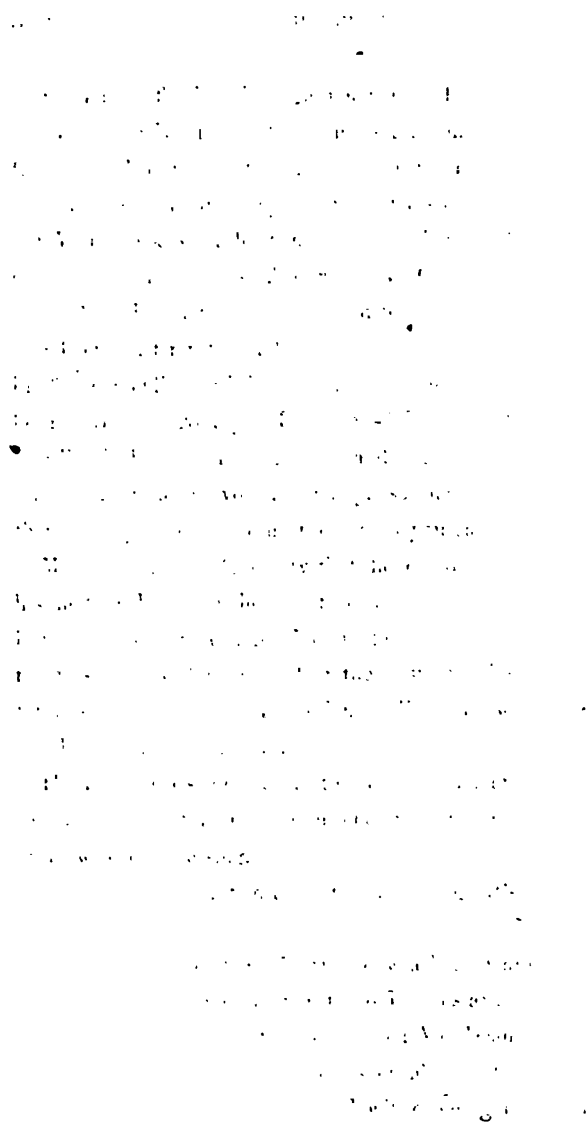
He now felt a strong desire to see his father once more. Martha was glad. She bade him obey that impulse, and sent him away with her blessing.

He found Margaret in the kitchen playing cat's-cradle with old Mr. Doane.

"Can you spare Miss Murray now a little while?" he asked, laying his hand tenderly upon the old man's arm.

"It is n't sundown yet, is it?" cried Mr. Doane.

"O, no, it is not quite noon," said Margaret. "But I must go home and see about dinner. I will come again and have some fine sport with you in a day or two."



fine sport with you in a day or two."

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"That 's right!" exclaimed the old man, brightening. "You 're a capital hand at these things. Dear me! how happy I 've been since you sat down here!"

Margaret's eyes glistened as she gave him a good-by kiss. Martin shook hands with him, not without emotion; and the two young people departed together. Martha Doane still occupied her chamber. She was alone with her God.

At the gate Martin and his companion met Amos, who appeared rubbing his eyes with his knuckles, and crying piteously.

"Have you been to school?" Margaret inquired.

"Yes 'm," snivelled the boy.

"How happens it that you come home so early?"

"Got dismissed. I an't going to school any more, either."

"Why not, Amos?" Margaret took him in her arms, and spoke to him with such kindness that his grief burst forth afresh. "Can't you tell me all about your trouble?"

"The boys plagued me — 'cause they said mother an't my mother — she found me in the poor-house."

Either the child's sobs or Margaret's sympathetic manner made quite a woman of Martin. He shed tears like a girl.

"What boys plagued you?" asked Margaret.

Amos catalogued the names of his persecutors, amid explosions of grief.

"I am sorry they did not know any better than to do so," said Margaret. "I would not cry, It makes no difference whether you came from the poor-house or from the Sandwich Islands, if you are only a good boy. Where are the Sandwich Islands?"

"Don't know," blubbered Amos.

"You must find out about them. Walk with me a little ways, and I will tell you a story about a fourth-cousin of mine, who lived

six years with the savages on one of those islands, and married an Indian girl for a wife. Will you come? Your mother don't want to see you quite yet. We will have the story; then, if you like, we will go and talk with the boys who plagued you; and I have no doubt but we will make them so heartily ashamed of their conduct that they will all want to ask your forgiveness."

Amos was reluctant. But Martin, who regarded his case with peculiar sympathy, kindly took one of his hands, while Margaret took the other, and said a few words which decided him to return with them. They accordingly went around by the school-house, which they reached just as the pupils were coming out for the nooning. Margaret was known and beloved by all; many ran to meet her with bright faces; but a few, seeing whom she led by the hand, hung back. They were the persecutors of Amos.

To Martin it was a sight full of beauty and pathos, to see her he so loved and admired take by the hand each of the thoughtless offenders, and tell them how sorry she was to hear what they had done. She was indeed sorry, and they knew it, for she wept; and they wept too, ashamed. So she made friends between them and the injured Amos, who now looked as though he considered himself quite a hero for having enlisted the championship of such a powerful peace-maker as Miss Murray.

This was a trifling incident in itself, but to Martin it was of dearer account than the story of his country's freedom.

"You transfigure the world to my sight," said he, as he walked on by her side. "It never seemed so full of light and beauty as it is this day! You give me courage and hope to go forth and labor in the fields of humanity. And I will labor, Margaret! These hands shall not be idle. No fear of prejudice, no low ambition, no tempting bait of luxury, shall turn me from my pur-

pose. O, spirit of Justice! spirit of Love! be thou my strength! And you, Margaret, — be you my guardian angel, to prompt and encourage me by your sympathy and your example, and this work will be sweeter to my soul than the joys of princes or the dreams of lovers!"

There are thoughts no written language can paint, — sentiments which only the spirit that reveals itself in the magic of the eye and voice can express. Of such was Margaret's response.

The way back to the parsonage was longer than it seemed. Margaret had quite forgotten the care of dinner; and the filial impulse that moved in Martin's breast when he arose to go to his father was absorbed in a deeper emotion.

If any faith could be placed in the intuitions of Alice, whose susceptible spirit was often so mysteriously affected by those around her, then, judging by the feeling that inspired her on the arrival of her friends, the waters of happiness had that day leaped high in their hearts. She said little, but her conduct showed a passionate joy: she embraced them, she threw herself at their feet in the very excess of joy. Martin was alarmed. The delicate casket that contained her life seemed ready to break. He took her in his arms, and soothed her with kind words; and in a little while her panting bosom moved more peacefully, and a heavenly light shone through her tears.

"My child, — you see I call you a child still, although you are fast becoming a woman," at length said Martin, — "my dear Alice, your love is very precious to me; and in my happiest moments I have thought of you most. I see no future without you in it. And on your part, — how would you like to go and live with me at Summer Hill, if that should be my home?"

"I should like it, O, so well! But"— Alice looked thoughtful and troubled, — "I think — I think I would stay here."

"I know you love your friends here very much, and I am glad of it; but if, some time, Margaret should conclude to be our housekeeper up there, — then you would come!"

She made no reply; she trembled in Martin's arms.

"There is no one you love better, is there?

"I love you — I love you both, O, you don't know how much!" exclaimed the blind girl, troubled more and more, and speaking wildly. "But — I can't tell you now. Don't ask me. I never thought — I never had such feelings before. Don't mind me at all — I am such a silly girl!"

She struggled from Martin's embrace, and hastened from the room. Margaret followed her soon. She found her nestled in Junius' arms.

Again the fire of filial emotion flamed up in Martin's heart. Full of humility and charity, he went to meet his father.

Junius accompanied him on his way to Summer Hill: he talked of the blind girl's love.

"I have watched it," said he, "with a secret joy. It has unfolded its tender leaves unconsciously as a rose. You have not been more ignorant than she of its existence. But I have seen it. And it blooms for me!"

"O, use it gently!" returned Martin. "She is my sister!"

"Gently as I would use the dearest gift of God!" cried Junius. "I shall rest patient and happy while it ripens in the sunshine of heaven; then let the world smile, if it will, to see me choose a blind girl for my wife: I will also smile, and say, 'She hath eyes of which the blind world knoweth not.'"

"God bless you, brother!" exclaimed Martin, fervently.

They parted, and the young man hastened up Summer Hill.

If up to this hour he had fostered a shadow of resentful feeling against his father, it vanished, it disappeared like a guilty ghost before the advance of the pure day, when that father's arms received him. He was strangely melted; and on the parched and arid desert of his parent's heart the sweet rain of heaven, withholden through long years of worldly strife, descended like a flood.

"I know you forgive me, my son!" murmured Colonel Merrivale.

"From the bottom of my heart, if I have aught to forgive!" responded Martin. "But you have not sinned against me, nor against my mother; our souls you have not wronged."

"My own soul I have wronged, — I know it very well!" returned his father, mournfully. "Selfishness and injustice have eaten it like a disease. Pray for me, that I may be cured of that leprosy!"

"If there be any virtue in others' prayers, my mother's have made you whole," answered Martin. "Day and night, sir, she has poured out the waters of her spirit in agonies of prayer for you and me!"

"Wretch that I am! — wretch and fool that I am!" groaned the colonel. "My son, — my son, — pity me, and hate me not!"

Martin's head sank upon his father's bosom; and from that hour all walls of separation were broken down between them.

At sunset, father and son were walking, arm-in-arm, up and down the pleasant paths of Summer Hill. They conversed in low tones of voice, and the light of their countenances was softened and tender.

"And can you own me for your father before the world?" asked the colonel, after a long silence.

"I can," replied Martin, calmly. "I would have the world know me for what I am; then, if any love me, their love will be sweet; and I will endeavor so to live that those who despise me for my birth shall at least respect me for my manhood. So much wisdom I have learned from the lesson of my mother's life."

At that juncture, a carriage drove up the avenue, and the Hon. Mr. C———, a well-known politician, alighting, greeted the colonel with hearty expressions of friendship. The latter, after some hesitation, introduced his *son*.

"You are a happier man than I thought you," said Mr. C———. "I understood that you had the misfortune to lose your only son some months ago."

"Not my only son," returned the colonel. "This is my first-born and best beloved."

A significant smile, scarcely perceptible, flitted on the politician's lips. The color came in Martin's cheeks; but it passed; and he smiled too — serenely; and the eye that answered the gaze of his father's friend was clear and beautiful as the pure sky over their heads. Mr. C—— grasped his hand with unfeigned admiration, and declared that the colonel should be proud of such a son. The incident was symbolical and prophetic. Thus the world received our hero: first with a smile of derision, then with genuine and cordial esteem. And thus Martin met the world: first with a blush, then with the serenity of conscious truth.

Over every human soul born into this life hover two invisible powers — a demon and an angel in conflict. The one is the champion of Falsehood and Selfishness, the other fights the good fight in the name of Truth and Love. Since that darkest hour of Mar-

tha's sorrow, when on her baby's neck she laid its little cross of suffering, those unseen powers had striven over it for the mastery; but now, O reader! wert thou blessed with spiritual sight, thou mightest see the demon falling, falling forevermore, while from the seraph's sword of flame flash rays of the eternal life on Martin's soul.

And so our story ends; for what more remains to tell? It might, indeed, be related how Martin and Margaret, joined as one spirit and one flesh, shed the fragrance of their pure lives all about Summer Hill, laboring together for humanity and love; how Martha and Jared, and the good old man their father,— although the last went to heaven before the lapse of many years, and became a strong young angel, — lived in the light of those two luminous souls; how Colonel Merrivale, washed in the baptism of the better life, put on clean garments of purity and faith; how Theodore Milburn, enraged at seeing another heir step in between him and the property at Summer Hill, vented his spleen upon his unhappy young wife; and how poor Louise, flying to the welcoming arms of her new brother and sister, and laying her sick head upon their hearts, drank of the cup of peace at their hands; then how Alice, growing in years and strength, recovered, by a beautiful miracle of nature, her outward sight, yet without ever losing her inward vision, and brought to Junius a whole heaven of joy and blessing, as his wife. Much might be added concerning the ambitious Cheesy, who, continuing to progress, caused Uncle Joe to shudder and frown, and relate over and over again the follies of his own youth, by way of warning, — but was at length happily saved by his love for the fair Ellen, of gentle influence, who first made a man of him, then accepted him for a husband. But, with all this, it would be the duty of an impartial historian to give the future

history of George Leviston, who lived an old bachelor and *boarded* all his days, except when spending his summer vacations at Summer Hill; of the good Miss Tomes, who became the good Mrs. Flinks (Flinks of "Bounding Billows" memory); of Mr. Tiplilly and lady, who flashed like meteors through the sky of fashion; of the Wormletts, father and son, wriggling and jerking their way through life; and of the immortal Toplink, who, going to board at Mrs. Befflin's after Martin left, became caught in the snares of the fair Cicely; — so let us make haste to turn this last and perhaps most welcome leaf of all, and say — Farewell.

Farewell! Ah, could the reader know with what emotions that word comes from the heart of him who hath written a book, not for fame, still less for fortune, but all for love, — how much that is imperfect, how much that is unworthy in its pages, would be forgiven!

And so — Farewell!

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